ARUNACHALA SIVA

ARUNACHALA AKSHARAMANAMALAI
(Bridal Garland of Letters for Arunachala)

and

ARUNACHALA PANCHARATNAM
(Five Gems on Arunachala)

of

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Translation and Commentary

by

DR. T.M.P. MAHADEVAN

Sri Ramanasramam
Tiruvannamalai 606 603
2005

First Edition : 1978
Second Edition :
Third Edition : 2000 — 1000 copies
Fourth Edition : 2005 — 1000 copies

CC No. 1068

ISBN: 81-88018-51-1

Price: Rs.

Published by

V.S. Ramanan
President
Sri Ramanasramam
Tiruvannamalai 606 603
Tamil Nadu
INDIA

Email: ashram@ramana-maharshi.org
Website: www.ramana-maharshi.org

Typeset at

Sri Ramanasramam

Printed by

Sudarsan Graphics
Chennai 600 017

TO

THE REVERED MEMORY OF

SWAMI RAJESWARANANDA

WHO INTRODUCED ME IN MY TEENS

TO THE SAGE OF ARUNACHALA

PREFACE

The first article that was written by me on Bhagavan Sri Ramana was at the instance of the late Mr Arthur Osborne who was then on the editorial staff of the Indian Express Magazine Section. It was published in that paper under the title *Sri Ramana, Sage of Arunachala*, on Sunday 9th April 1950, five days before the passing away of the Master (14th April 1950).

During the subsequent years, Sri Ramanasramam has brought out my English translations of *Self-Enquiry* and *Who am I?* and also the book, *Ramana Maharshi and His Philosophy of Existence*. This contains a translation with a commentary on the *Forty Verses on Existence* and of the *Supplement*, as also some of my reflections on the significance of the Sage's life and teaching. In 1977, Messrs George Allen and Unwin, London, published my book *Ramana Maharshi, the Sage of Arunachala* which consists of three parts devoted respectively, to the life of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, his work and his teaching.

The present volume *Arunachala Siva*, gives to the English knowing readers, two of the five hymns to Arunachala composed by the Sage: *The Arunachala Akṣharamanamalai* (Bridal Garland of Letters for Arunachala)[1] and the

---

[1] Also known as *Marital Garland of Letters*.

Arunachala Pancharatnam (Five Verse-gems on Arunachala)[2]. The *Sunday Express* article is reproduced as an appendix.

T.M.P. MAHADEVAN

---

[2] Also known as *Five Gems an Arunachala*.

CONTENTS

Arunachala Aksharamanamalai

(Bridal Garland of Letters for Arunachala)

INTRODUCTION

MOST OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA'S compositions were written in answer to a query put, a doubt raised, or a request made by some devotee or other.

Some of them came out of him as the expression of an inner urge. He was no author in the ordinary sense of the term. The Truth he saw he revealed to those who wanted to have a glimpse of it. When Sri Ramana was staying at the Virupaksha cave on the Arunachala Hill, the devotees who were then with him desired that he should compose a song which they could sing while going out for begging alms. But there was no response then. Subsequently, however, when he was walking round the sacred Hill one day, with devotees following him, the litany, *Arunachala Akṣharamanamalai*, being divinely inspired, welled forth from him spontaneously. Referring to the manner of this composition, he himself later on said that it was not the result of any premeditation or conscious cogitation, but that it came out of his heart unexpectedly and spontaneously.

Of the hymns on Arunachala composed by Sri Ramana, the *Arunachala Akṣharamanamalai* was the earliest. The very name Arunachala had fascinated Sri Ramana right from his childhood. It was in search of Arunachala that he had left his home as a lad of seventeen. In the note that he left behind, he had stated that he was going in quest of his

Father, and that no one need go after him. After arriving at Tiruvannamalai, he stayed there till the end of his earthly life. To him Arunachala was no mere hill. It is the visible symbol of the Absolute Spirit. He found no contradiction between his *Advaita* experience and devotion to Arunachala. In fact, there can be no opposition between *jnana* and *bhakti* at the highest level. That view which holds that there is no place in *Advaita* for either God or devotion is clearly mistaken. There is an old Sanskrit verse which says that it is by the grace of God that even the inclination towards *Advaita* comes to a few. What is called God in the language of religion and mysticism is the same as the Absolute of *Advaita*. In bridal mysticism, the devotee considers himself to be the bride of God. He employs the intimate language of love in conversing with his Lord. All the processes connected with carnal love are observed to take place between the devotee-soul and the bridegroom, except the carnality. The devotee pines for, cringes, cajoles, chides and quarrels with the Beloved. There are courtship, union, separation, and reunion. In that phase of mysticism which is known as bridal mysticism, the mystic revels in the love-play with the Divine. The culmination of this *sadhana*, however, is the Realisation of non-duality. Love is never satisfied so long as the dualistic consciousness lasts. Where twoness is, there is no true love. Love is oneness; *ananda* is *Advaita*; the *Atman* is *rasa*. In Sri Ramana's love-litany we have this clearly taught. Even in the first verse of the hymn he speaks of the 'I am Arunachala' experience. When love matures and realises itself, there is nothing but Arunachala.

Arunachala is all; all is Arunachala. This is the plenary experience which is *Advaita*.

The title of this lyric poem, Arunachala Aksharamanamalai, means 'the bridal garland of letters for Arunachala.' *Mana Malai* is the wedding-garland which symbolises the union of the bride with the bridegroom. It also means sweet-scented garland. The poem is called *Aksharamanamalai* because the initial letters of the verses of the hymn are in the alphabetical order. *Aksharamanamalai* may also mean 'the garland that serves as the insignia of marriage with the undecaying (*akshara*) Lord'. The phrase contains the name of Bhagavan Sri Ramana too — *aksha-ramana*. It is significant that the hymn is composed of 108 verses — a number that is supremely sacred.

INVOCATION

aruṇāchala vararkēṭra vakshara maṇa mālai śāṭrak
karuṇākara gaṇapatiyē karam aruḷik kāppāyē

As I offer the bridal garland of letters to the Lord Arunachala, protect me, grace-bestowing Ganapati, by extending a lifting hand!

This is an invocation to Ganapati, the remover of all obstacles. The invocation is made so that the purpose of this poem may be fulfilled, *viz*., to bring about the union of the soul with God — or, in other words, to effect the realisation of the non-difference of the *jiva* from *Brahman*.

The bridegroom (*vara*) is Arunachala. The phrase can also be taken to mean *Arunachala Hara*. The bride is the devotee-soul. The latter longs to meet the Lord and become one with Him. In order to symbolise this union, she makes a garland of letters, and fervently hopes that this would be accepted by the Lord. Fearing that there may be obstacles in the way, she prays to Ganapati for success in her mission.

[1] In its essential or universal form or nature.

REFRAIN

aruṇāchala-siva aruṇāchala-siva
aruṇāchala-siva aruṇāchalā
aruṇāchala-siva aruṇāchala-siva
aruṇāchala-siva aruṇāchalā

This is the *mantra* or theme of this grand litany. It is recited at the end of each verse. Even those who are not acquainted with the verses join in the recitation of this *mantra* in chorus.

The *mantra* is *Arunachala Siva*. Siva is the most auspicious name of God. It itself means ‘The Auspicious’. Siva, the formless, appears in many forms in order to bestow his grace on his devotees. At Tiruvannamalai, the form he assumes is that of light and fire — the light that reveals the truth, the fire that burns away all impurities. There is a legend according to which Siva appeared as a column of light at this place, and Brahma and Vishnu failed to discover the top and bottom, respectively, of this column. The source of *Linga* worship is to be traced to this legend. The *Linga* is the symbol of the luminous Siva who has neither beginning nor end. The Arunachala Hill is itself a *Linga* of Siva. It is believed that in *krita yuga* it was a hill of fire, in *treta yuga* a hill of gems, in *dvapara yuga* a hill of gold and that in *kali yuga* it has become a hill of stone. To mark the association of the Hill with fire, a lamp is lit at its top once a year. Arunachala, the Fire-Hill, is the symbol of the immutable Reality. To the devotee, Arunachala is the Bridegroom.

1

aruṇāchalamena vahamē ninaippava
rahattaivē raṛuppā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou dost root out the egoity of those who think 'I am, verily, Arunachala!'

It is God's grace that leads to Self-realization. The culmination of devotion (*bhakti*) to God lies in the realization of the non-dual Spirit. Arunachala the Supreme God, is the Self of the so called individual soul. What prevents the soul from realising this fact is the ego, born of ignorance. The ego, the pseudo 'I', has usurped the place of the real 'I', God. The soul, identifying itself with the ego, has estranged itself from God. The purpose of devotion is to remove this estrangement and bring about the recognition of God as the real 'I'. The final realization is of the form "I Am Arunachala", "I and the Father in Heaven are one." Here the word 'I' denotatively and connotatively means God and not the ego. The Supreme Identity is the end of even *bhakti*.

In some of the *bhakti* schools four paths are taught: the path of the servant (*dasa marga*), the path of the good son (*satputra marga*), the path of the friend (*sakha marga*), and the path of good union (*san marga*). Here, the grading is on the principle of lessening the distance between the devotee and the deity. The goal, therefore, must be the annihilation of even the least distance between the soul and God; in other words, the aim is the realization of the Supreme Identity. What stands in the way of this realization is the ego, and what causes the ego to appear is ignorance.

Devotion to God results in the destruction of ignorance, the root cause of the ego.

2

azhagu sundarampō lahamum nīyumu
ṭrabinnamā yiruppō maruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Like (the words) *azhagu* (Tamil for 'beauty') and *Sundara* (Sanskrit for 'beauty') let me and Thou be completely non-different!

Non-difference is the goal of *bhakti*. The so called *jiva* and *Isvara* are one in reality. The oneness of the two, however, is not as endowed with adjuncts, but as free from them. The *jiva*'s ignorance makes for the difference; when the ignorance is removed, the oneness is realized. Arunachala and the *bhakta*, God and soul, are not two, *sub specie aeternitatis*.[1] An example of apparent difference and essential non-difference is given. The Tamil word *azhagu*, means 'beauty'. The Sanskrit word *sundara* also means the same. One who knows either language alone may imagine that the two words have different meanings. Most language controversies arise out of ignorance. When one realizes the identical connotation of the two words, one would know that it is evil to be misled by difference in expression.

Note: *Azhagu* and *Sundara* were the names, respectively, of Sri Ramana's mother and father.

---

[1] In its essential or universal form or nature.

3

ahampugun tīrttun nahaguhai śiraiyā
yamarvitta denko laruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! What a wonder this — that Thou didst enter my mind, and rescuing me, holdest me captive in the cave of Thy heart!

The mind which is but a cluster of desires and the home of unrest is the *jiva's* residence. The ether of the heart which is unsullied and pure is the place of the Lord. It is in the cave of the Heart that He is said to be hidden (*guhahita*). His saving grace makes Him lift the soul out of the slough of despond and draw her into His home, the Heart which is the hall of bliss. The Lord expects nothing in return. His benignity knows no bargain. Even under the slightest pretext, He is prepared to save the soul. In her empirical state, the soul is a captive of the roving mind. By the grace of the Lord, she is liberated from the mind's torture, and is afforded safety and protection.

This Sanctuary of my soul
Unwitting I keep white and whole,
Unlatched and lit, if Thou shoulds't care
To enter or to tarry there.

— *Captain Sorley*.

Note: Sri Ramana left his parental home as a boy of seventeen, being rescued by Arunachala and remained unwaveringly thereafter at Tiruvannamalai.

4

āruk kāvenai yāṇḍanai yagaṭridi
lakilam pazhittiḍu maruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! For whose sake didst Thou rescue me? If (now) Thou dost reject me, the world will accuse Thee!

God saves the soul by bestowing His grace upon her for no purpose of His own. He has nothing to accomplish, no end to achieve. It is for the soul's sake that He rescues her from bondage. Having rescued her, He will protect her for ever. But the devotee-soul is in doubt. Having had to pay bitterly for her association with her fleeting companions — the denizens of the world, and having now regained the grace of the Lord, she is apprehensive that divine protection may be withdrawn from her. So, she appeals to the good sense of her Lord: "Do not reject me saying, 'You are no good, you have this defect and that'. Having drawn me unto you, it is not proper that you should send me away. If you desert me, what will the world think of you? It will certainly blame you; and you pretty well know that it is interested in blaming you, and is only looking for a chance. At least for the fear of public opinion, you should not be inconstant to me."

5

ippazhi tappunai yēninaip pittā
yiniyār viḍuvā raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Save Thyself from this accusation. Why didst Thou make me pine for Thee? Who will, hereafter, leave Thee?

The devotee-soul is zealous of the reputation of the Lord. She would not bear to think that He, the most compassionate one, should be accused of harshness and desertion. Look at her own plight! If she had not been rescued at all, there would be no problem. She would have continued to enjoy the delights of the world, imagining that they constituted happiness. But the Lord has created in her a taste for the Infinite by revealing Himself to her; and she has learnt to pine for Him. Even the soul's ability to pine for Him is the result of His grace. Having now been accepted by Him, how can the devotee leave Him? As a *Vaishnava* saint puts it addressing the Lord: "How can the soul that has taken refuge in your lotus feet which yield immortality, desire anything else? When the lotus bloom is there filled with honey, the bee will not cast even as much as a glance at the sugarcane stalk."

6

īnḍriḍu mannayir peridaruḷ purivō
yiduvō vunadaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou art one who showers grace which is greater than that of one's own mother. Is this, then, Thy grace? (Or, such, indeed, is Thy grace!)

The finest example in the world of a love that is pure and unselfish is that of the mother. She is prepared and always ready and willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of her child. The child's welfare is her only concern; she is utterly indifferent to and unmindful of what may happen to herself. To the devotee, God is more than a mother. He is all grace and compassion (*dayamaya*), an ocean of unbargaining love (*kripa jalanidhi*). He showers His grace without let or hindrance. He expects nothing from the devotee-soul, not even her allegiance. He creates the cosmos, protects it and periodically withdraws it in order to enable the soul to progress and eventually gain the greatest possible benefit, that is, Liberation.

Adverting to the fear expressed in the previous verse, the devotee-soul now points out to the Lord that if He were to desert her, it would not be in keeping with His loving nature which is even finer than that of a mother. So, the devotee asks: Is this thy grace?

Or, the words *iduvo vunadarul* may be taken to mean: Such, indeed, is thy grace, a grace that is greater than that of a mother.

Note: The Lord of the Rock Temple at Tiruchirappalli bears the name *Matrubhuteswara, Tayumanavar*, the one who came as the mother.

7

unaiyē māṭri yōḍā duḷattinmē
luṛudiyā yiruppā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Be Thou firmly seated in my heart, so that it may not run away, duping Thee.

The pranks that the mind plays and the ways that it adopts for deceiving itself are well known. Ordinarily, the mind moves out through the sense channels and gets distracted and dissipated. It is centrifugal in its tendency, and allows itself to be dragged in different directions at the same time. The taming of the mind is a hard task. The disciplines that are prescribed in the sacred texts are designed to subdue the mind and make it one-pointed. It is easy to perform miracles such as walking on water or sitting on fire, says a Tamil saint. It is easy to accomplish such difficult feats as making the elephant and the tiger do one's bidding; but that skill is hard whereby one controls one's mind and sits still. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna complains to Sri Krishna, "Unsteady, verily, is the mind, turbulent, tenacious and strong; to control it is as difficult, I think, as it is to curb the wind." Sri Krishna agrees with Arjuna and says, "Without doubt, the mind is difficult to subdue and unsteady; but it can be controlled through practice and dispassion."

In the *Sivananda Lahari*, Sri Sankara likens the mind to the monkey that jumps from one branch of desire to another, goes from one hill of passion to another, roams about in the forest of delusion, and is extremely active and mischievous. Addressing Siva as the prince of beggars, *Kapalin*, he says, "Take this monkey as my alms-gift to you, after tying it firmly with the rope of *bhakti*." The purpose of devotion is to sublimate the mind and make it one-pointed. Prahlada prays to Narasimha, "The love that the ignorant bear for the objects of sense — may that love (that flows towards you) as I contemplate you remain constant without leaving my heart!"

In the present verse the Lord is implored to sit tight in the heart so that the heart may not go astray. Even the Lord has to be vigilant and keep constant watch over the doings of the heart. The heart may run away if the hold on it is slackened even a little. It is deceitful and may want to deceive even God (*unai ēmātri*, deceiving you). If the words are split as *unaiyē mātri*, the phrase would mean: changing or transforming even you.

8

ūrsuṭr rulamviḍā dunaikkaṇ ḍaḍangiḍa
vunnazha gaikkāṭ ṭaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Reveal Thy beauty so that the mind, which is by nature roving, may get quiescent seeing Thee uninterruptedly.

The mind runs without rest. It revolves round the objects of sense, imagining that its happiness lies there. As desires arise, it seeks to fulfil them, hoping to derive satisfaction that way. But the more it gets, the less contented it becomes. The faster it runs, the more restless it finds itself. All this mad rush for sense objects is born out of a false view which presents those objects in an attractive way. It is the bliss that is the Self (*atmananda*) that is reflected in the objects (*vishayananda*); and it is this reflection that fascinates the mind. The shadow is mistaken for the substance, the dry bones for the juicy flesh. The mind gets disappointed each time it gains its wish. Yet the lesson is repeatedly forgotten, and the same story of striving, gaining and losing goes on.

In order that the mind may be weaned from sense objects, God is implored to reveal His beauty. In truth, there is no beauty other than God. The so called beautiful objects of the world are but pale reflections of the splendour that is God, broken arcs of the perfect orb. God is *bhuvana Sundara*, the beauty that can ravish the entire world. He is *rasa*, the sweetness that surpasses every taste; *brahmananda*, the bliss that is without limit; *niratisaya sukha*, happiness that is never excelled. The saints who have seen God have described Him as *manmatha-manmatha*, the Cupid of Cupid, and madana-mohana, the Beauty of beauty. For the sake of saving souls by enticing them, God is born in the world as *avatara*. The names of such *avataras* as Rama and Krishna, indicate their purpose also, which is to bring delight into the hearts of beings. Siva as Sundaresa, the lord of beauty, is said to have performed his sports in

Madurai, the city of sweetness, so that all might be happy. Sometimes God takes an awful form in order to show that there is beauty even in ugliness. Looking at the Narasimha (man-lion) form of the Lord, Lakshmi began to shudder and was afraid to approach it. But the boy Prahlada danced with joy, ran to the Lord and sat on His lap.

Sri Krishna revealed to Arjuna His cosmic form (*visvarupa*), after granting him the divine eye (*divya chakṣush*). Arjuna could not stand the sight of the *ghorarupa* (frightful form) for long and prayed to Sri Krishna to resume His normal and usual form.

In order to captivate even the ordinary mind, God has to take a comely form. It is then that the mind is likely to leave its vain pursuit of the fleeting pleasures of the world, and lie quietly, contemplating the beauty that is God.

9

enaiyazhit tippō denaikkala vāviḍi
liduvō vāṇmai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! If Thou dost not join me now, destroying my egoity — is this Thy manliness?

The devotee-soul appeals to the Lord to join her and make her His own. She has come of age and is now mature. She has also chosen the Lord as her consort, and would think of no one else. It is now time for Him to come and take her under His protection. Not being able to bear isolation any more, she cries out to the Lord imploring Him to come. It is

only He, the Bridegroom, that can destroy the soul's virginity which is egoity. The devotee-soul takes the liberty of rebuking the Lord, saying that if He does not do His part, He would forfeit His title to *purusottamatva* (being the Supreme Male).

10

ēninda vurakka menaippiṛa rizhukka
viduvunak kazhagō varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Why this sleep, while others are dragging me? Does this become Thee?

The rivals to the Lord are the senses and their objects. They drag the soul even though they have no right to do so. Their control over her is illegitimate. Belonging to the class of not-self as they do, they ought not to get into an alliance with the soul. But the ignorant soul, forgetting her spiritual nature, consorts with the senses and their objects. The latter hold her captive to their whims and fancies. When the soul realizes her sorry plight, she becomes a devotee and remembers that she belongs to the Lord. If she belongs to the Lord, why has He not come to her rescue? Has He gone to sleep? Why should He be indifferent when she is seduced by others? This is not fair. He has all the power and strength required to save her. So, she rebukes her Lord, "Why do you sleep, when something that intimately belongs to you is being misused? This is an insult not so much to me as to you. You are the Lord and it is your inalienable duty to safeguard my honour."

11

aimpulak kaḷva rahattiniṛ pugumbō
dahattinī yilaiyō varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! When the five senses, the thieves, entered my heart, were Thou not in my heart?

The five senses are here compared to thieves. A thief is one who deceitfully takes away what does not belong to him. The soul is not a property of the senses; yet the senses take her away. The senses storm the heart, enter it by force, and snatch away the soul. But how can this happen? Was not the omnipotent Lord there in the heart? If He were there, how dared the senses to trespass? It is not possible that they have power over the authority of the Lord. Being present in the heart, He could not be sleeping; for He is ever wakeful; He is all-seeing, always (*sarva drik̦ sada*). Shall we say that He was not present? But how can that be, since He is present everywhere?

In the following Sanskrit verse, the passions are compared to thieves:

kāmah krōdhās cha lōbhās cha
dēhē tishṭanti taskarah,
jnānaratnāpahārāya
tasmāt jāgrata jāgrata.

Desire, anger, and greed — these thieves reside in the body in order to steal the wisdom-gem. Therefore, be awake, be awake!

12

oruvanā munnai yoḷittevar varuvā
runsū dēyidu varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Deceiving Thee who art One (without a second) who will come in? This, indeed, is Thy guile!

If it is not possible to assume either that the Lord was not asleep or that He was not absent when the sense-thieves entered the heart, what is the conclusion one is inevitably led to? It is this, *viz.*, that all this is the Lord's *maya*. He cannot be deceived. Who or what is there to deceive Him, since He is all? He is one without a second. The world of plurality is His play. The world drama including the dance of the senses must, therefore, be His device for awakening the soul from her stupor. One of His appellations is that He is the stage manager of the drama of deceit (*kapata nataka sutradharin*). The *Satarudriya* calls Him the Lord of thieves (*taskaranam patih*).

13

ōnkārapporu ḷoppuyar villō
yunaiyā raṛivā raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou art the meaning of the sacred syllable 'Om'. Thou art without an equal or superior. Who can understand Thee?

By innumerable names has God been designated. To signify this it is usually said that He has a thousand names. Of all these names, the most appropriate is the sacred syllable 'Om' called *Pranava*. *Pranava* is His name, says the *Yoga Sutra*. The *Mandukya Upanishad* begins by saying: 'Om' is all this—what was, what is, and what will be; it is also what transcends the threefold time. The sound 'Om' consists of three letters or *matras*, **a**, **u** and **m**; there is also a fourth part which is soundless (*amatra*). The three letters stand respectively for the three manifestations of the Self both in the order of individual existence and in the order of cosmic appearance. The Self is *visva*, *taijasa*, *prajna* (of the waking, dream, and sleep states, respectively), and *Virat*, *Hiranyagarbha*, and *Avyakrita*, (the cosmic counterparts). 'Om' is what is beyond these as well, as also their inner reality, *turiya* (the Fourth).

'Om' is the name of the Nameless. It is a name, and yet not a name. Hence it is the nearest to the nameless Reality. The absolute Reality has no form. But limited and formed as we are, we have assigned myriads of forms to it. Of all these representations, the *linga* is the most appropriate because it has a form and yet no form. While the other representations have their particular names, the *linga* signifies simply the sign or symbol. The origin of the *linga* is traced to the column of light in the form of which God appeared as Arunachala. So, the original *linga* is Arunachala. What *linga* is among spatial representations of God, that 'Om' is among His names. Arunachala is thus the meaning of the sacred syllable 'Om'.

Since Arunachala is all, there is nothing that is equal to Him, nor anything that is superior to Him. He is not one among many. He is the one without a second. Addressing the Lord, Arjuna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'There is no one equal to Thee; how can there be anyone that is superior?' The *Vedanta* teaches that God or the Absolute is the sole reality. It is not easy to understand this reality. Brahman is that whence speech and mind return, not being able to reach. It is the transcendent reality that defies description. It is that which the mind is powerless to understand, but which yields to mind the power of understanding. It is the mind of mind, the understanding of understanding.

14

auvvaipō lenakkun naruḷait tandenai
yāḷuva dunkaḍa naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Bestowing on me Thy grace, like a mother, to redeem me is Thy duty.

In verse six, God was described as one who is more than a mother. Here, again, there is the comparison with mother. A mother's love is the summit of human love. We, who approach God from the human angle, do naturally apply to Him all that is best and noblest in human nature.

Here is a prayer to God that He should protect His devotee who is His child. God is the universal parent. He is the mother as well as the father. Saving the children is not an optional function of the parent. It is his or her duty. So, the

devotee reminds God of what is but His duty—a duty not imposed on Him by an external authority, but one which is His own ordinance.

The expression '*auvvaipol*' may also be taken to mean 'as on Mother'. Then, the interpretation of the text would be this: 'As you bestowed grace on Mother, so bestow it on me too and save me. That is Your duty.' The reference here is to the story of Parvati gaining half the body of Siva at Arunachala.

15

kaṇṇukkuk kaṇṇāik kaṇṇinḍrik kāṇunaik
kāṇuva devarpā raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Being the Eye of the eye, without eye Thou seest. Who can see Thee? See!

'Of all the sense organs', as the saying goes, 'the most important is the eye'. What light is for the external world, that the eye is for the living individual. The eye is even more important than light, for what is the use of light if there be no eyes to see? The eyes may be wide open and in a sound condition. But if the mind be absent, they cannot see. While without the eyes the mind can see, without the mind the eyes cannot see. In dreams the physical organs do not function; but the mind creates its own organs and causes experience. The mind too is not an independent light. It borrows luminosity from the Self. In sleep the mind does not function; yet there is experience — the experience of the non-existence of objects. That experience is the Self. God is the Self, the

eye that never fails. As Sri Ramana says in the *Forty Verses on Existence*, the Self is the endless eye (*antamilak kann*). In the present verse he observes that Arunachala is the eye of the eye. Answering a question about the moving power behind the sense organs and mind, the *Kena Upanishad* seeks to indicate the nature of that power which is *Brahman* by saying that it is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, the eye of the eye. The third eye assigned to Lord Siva is a symbol of the fact that the Supreme is the eye of the eye.

The eye derives its ability to see from God; but God does not depend on the eye for seeing. God sees without the help of the eye. God, the Self, is pure experience; He makes all experience possible. But He himself is not an object of experience. Only the conditioned can be experienced; the unconditioned is never an experienced content. Hence Sri Ramana asks, 'Who can see Thee?'

16

kānta mirumbupōṛ kavarndenai viḍāmaṛ
kalandenō ḍiruppā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Like magnet which attracts iron, thou shouldst draw me, and without letting me go, be in union with me.

One of the familiar similes for *bhakti* (devotion) is the attraction of iron filings by magnet. This figures as one of the five found in a verse of the *Sivananda Lahari*:

ankolam nijabijasantatir ayaskantopalam suchika
sadhvi naijavibhum lata kshitiruham sindhuh sarid vallabham
prapnotiha yatha tatha pasupateh padaravinda dvayam
chetovrttir upetya tishtathi sada sa bhaktir ityuchyate.

The seeds of the *ankola* tree on falling to the ground go and attach themselves to the trunk of the tree. The needle sticks to the magnet. The chaste woman thinks constantly of her lord. The creeper winds itself onto a tree. The river flows unceasingly towards the ocean. When the mind in a similar way remains at the feet of God without moving from there even for a moment, that is *bhakti*.

The point to be noted about the simile of the magnet is that without itself moving, the magnet draws the needle unto itself. The nature of the needle is such that it gets influenced by the magnet. God is the unmoving (*achyuta*) principle. Yet His influence moves the devotee-soul who in turn seeks Him alone to the exclusion of all other ends.

Here, in this verse, the soul longs to lose herself in the Being of God. She implores her Lord to engulf her so that there may be no individuality left in her. The union viewed from the side of the soul is sometimes compared to that of water with water, milk with milk.

17

giriyuru vāgiya kirubaik kaḍalē
kripaikūrn daruluvā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Ocean of grace in the form of Hill! Graciously bestow Thy grace on me.

The Lord appears as the Hill of Light. The analogy of the hill is designed to remind us of the majesty, magnificence, and magnitude of God. The splendour of Arunachala is immeasurable. He is beyond the reach of speech and mind. Even the gods could not gauge His greatness. He seems to stand afar, towering over everything. He is transcendent. Yet He is immanent. There is nothing nearer than He, for He is the Self of all. He is the vast sea of mercy, the ocean of grace. The mythical milk-ocean is the symbol of benignity and benevolence. God is compared to the ocean by virtue of His graciousness and goodness. If He is the height of wisdom, He is the depth of feeling also. He encompasses all, engulfs all. It is on His grace that all subsist.

There is no prayer that is more efficacious or noble than the one for the descent of His grace. People often pray for petty things. This is no doubt better than not praying at all. But the best prayer is that which is not motivated by the spirit of the market. One ought to pray because one ought to. Grace is the complement of prayer. The devotee-soul prays to God for nothing but God who is grace; and the prayer itself is made possible because of grace.

18

kīzhmē leṇguṅ kiḷaroḷi maṇiyen
kīzhmaiyaip pāzhsei yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! The gem that shines below, above, everywhere! Do destroy my baseness!

To us of the plains, the mountain top is above and the ocean bed below. Limited as we are, we make such distinctions as high and low, far and near, before and after, good and bad. To God, however, who is omnipresent and all-pervading there are no distinctions whatsoever. He is the same everywhere, always, and in all things. In fact, there is no 'other' to Him. He is the One, without a second. He is the Self-luminous Consciousness. Hence the comparison to the luminous gem. Its light does not discriminate between one and another, although it is highly precious. God, the *Atman*, is *svayam-jyotis* (Self-luminous). In the words of the *Upanishad*, "It is below and above, it is before and behind, it is to the south and to the north. The Self is all this."

Although the Self-effulgent Intelligence is always there, we close our eyes and complain that we do not see. Nescience (*avidya*) blinds us. It is the root of all evil and sin. It constitutes the basic baseness. The devotee-soul appeals to God for the removal of (*avidya*). She reminds Him of His promise:

sarva dharman parityajya mamekam saranam vraja,
aham tva sarva papebhyo mokshayisyami ma suchah

Surrendering all dharmas, seek refuge in Me alone. I will release you from all sins. Do not grieve!

19

kuṭramuṭr raruttenai guṇamāip paṇittāḷ
guruvuru vāyoḷi raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Destroying my sins completely, save me by making me good, O thou that shinest in the form of the Master!

'Destroy my baseness', pleaded the devotee-soul with the Lord in the previous verse. The same plea is repeated here. The basic baseness is nescience (*avidya*). Here it is referred to as sin or defect (*kutram*). Nescience is the root of all other sins. *Saiva Siddhanta* enumerates three primary defects of the soul: *anava*, *maya* and *karma*. In *Advaita Vedanta*, three generations of defects are often mentioned: *avidya*, *kama* and *karma*. *Karma* consists of the deeds that we do and their residual impressions. Desire (*kama*) is the seed of these. It, in its turn, is the result of the wrong identification of the self with egoity, etc., which is nescience (*avidya*) or ignorance (*ajnana*). Thus nescience is the original sin (*mula mala*). All other sins will vanish only when nescience is completely destroyed. Nescience is compared to the darkness that blinds, the knot that binds, etc. Wisdom is the light that will dispel this darkness, the sword that will cut this knot. It is by the grace of God that wisdom is gained. Wisdom is the supreme good. To use a saying of Socrates, knowledge is virtue. The natural goodness of the soul is revealed when the defects are removed. God removes the defects, functioning as the Guru. The word Guru means, 'the one who destroys the darkness of ignorance'. The one who destroys ignorance

cannot be himself subject to ignorance. This is God, the Supreme Self. God, Guru, *Atman* — these are but the different forms of one and the same Reality — the Reality, that as the world teacher, is called Dakshinamurti, the truth that is all pervading like the ether:

isvaro gurur atmeti murti bheda vibhagine
vyomavat vyapta dehaya dakshinamurtaye namah.

20

kūrvāṭ kaṇṇiyar koḍumayiṛ paḍādaruḷ
kūrndenaich chērndaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Without letting me fall to the viles of those who are cruel and deceitful, bestow thy grace on me and be in union with me.

The world is too much with us. We fall into its viles, not knowing that that way lies our doom. Our senses drag us away from what is good and permanent, the supreme Self. Our mind becomes captive to the passing shows that only distract and demoralize it. The play of *maya* deceives us; its agents, the objects, spread a net as it were in which we are caught. Having made slaves of us, they harass and rack us without mercy.

Who can save the devotee-soul from this sad plight but God, her Lord? So, she appeals to Him to come to her succour and save her from her dire distress. If only she could get united with her Lord through His grace, no harm would happen to her.

21

kenjiyum vanjiyāik konjamu mirangilai
yanjalen ṛēyaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Although I implore, Thou, as one deceitful, dost not show mercy. Saying 'Do not fear!' bestow grace on me.

This is praise in the form of blame (*nindastuti*). It is not that God is deceitful, or that He is unmerciful. Arunachala has already been described as the ocean of grace. If the field has not been prepared and if the seeds do not sprout, it is not the fault of the gentle rain. The defects resident in the soul prevent the descent of grace. The devotee-soul who has turned Godward realizes this fact and prays to the Lord for removal of the defects. In the course of her journey she becomes impatient sometimes and accuses the Lord for her delay. Let Him not even run immediately to the soul to save her. Let Him at least give the assurance that she need have no fear. Let Him promise her protection from fear (*abhaya pradana*).

22

kēḷā daḷikkumun kēḍil pugazhaik
kēḍusey yādaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Bestow Thy grace without tarnishing Thy blemishless fame for giving without asking.

The devotee-soul continues to invoke the grace of the Lord. In the case of an earthly lord, one has often to ask

explicitly what one wants from him. For one thing, he may not know what is wanted from him; for another, even if he knew, he may not be able to give it. The characteristic of a finite person is that he has little knowledge and less power. God, on the contrary, is omniscient and omnipotent. He knows the needs of all beings, and has the power to satisfy them. Such, indeed, is His greatness. If He does not now come to the succour of the pining devotee-soul, what will happen to that greatness? What will people think of the Lord? Will they not either belittle His knowledge or accuse Him of heartlessness? So, at least to safeguard His reputation, He should shower His grace on the devotee soul.

23

kaiyiniṛ kaniyun meyrasaṅ koṇḍuva
gaiveṛi koḷavaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Grant Thy grace that I may become mad with joy drinking Thee, the genuine juice, as from a fruit on the palm of one's hand.

'The fruit on the palm of one's hand' is the usual simile for anything that is crystal clear and has been attained without doubt. The fruit that is ordinarily mentioned in this connection is the *amalaka* (Emblic Myrobalan). In the present context, however, a fruit like the grape would be more appropriate.

God is compared to fruit juice because of His delight giving nature. He is the supreme essence (*rasa*). The *Taittiriya Upanishad* (II, vii) declares:

raso vai sah rasam hy evayam labdhva
anandi bhavati ho hy evanyat kah
pranyat yad esa akasa ananda na syat.
esa hy eva anandayati

'The essence is He. Having obtained the essence, one becomes happy. Who can breathe in or breathe out if this happiness in the heart-ether were not? And, it is He that brings in happiness.'

24

koḍiyiṭ taḍiyaraik kollunaik kaṭṭik
koṇḍeṅgan vāzhvē naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Determined as Thou art to kill Thy devotees — how am I to survive after embracing Thee?

The goal of *Advaita* mysticism is the identity realization, which means the transcendence of even the devotee-devoted relationship. This is the significance of the sentiment, that God is determined to kill His devotees. The ego of the devotee is totally destroyed by God's grace. Thereafter, how could difference exist? Although we speak of spiritual marriage, there is a good deal of difference between what we know as marriage and spiritual union. In the latter there are no two entities, while the former requires two. There is no individuality left in the devotee-soul after the divine embrace. The act of embracing the divine is a process of self-noughting.

Sureshwara, in his *Brihad Vartika*, makes the Sage Yajnavalkya address the following words to his wife Maitreyi:

"Impelled by her great love for Siva, Parvati wrought herself into half his body. But you long for gaining the whole of my being with your whole self."

25

kōpamil guṇattōy kuriyā yenaikkoḷak
kuṛaiyen seydē naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou art without anger and art endowed with all auspicious qualities. For thee to accept me as Thy target, what meritorious deed have I done? (Or, what offence have I committed?)

God, the Absolute, has no qualities. But if qualities should be assigned to God, nothing that is despicable or evil can be attributed to Him. For purposes of worship, He is regarded as endowed with all auspicious qualities. Passions such as anger etc., do not belong to Him. In our ignorance, we may imagine that God's act of destruction is born of His anger. But those who know the truth know that world destruction is the most benevolent act of God. As sleep is to the individual soul, so is cosmic dissolution to the entire creation. Of the trinity of Godhead, the function of destruction is associated with Rudra Siva; and consequently some are inclined to characterize Rudra as the angry God. This, however, has no justification. Rudra is Siva, the most auspicious and blissful Divinity.

In the august presence of Arunachala Siva the devotee-soul realizes her imperfection. Yet, if she should have received the grace of Siva, it must be, she feels, due to some past

merit. Divine grace is not measured out in accordance with the desires of the soul. If that were so, it would cease to be grace. All that God waits for is the proper attitude of receptivity on the part of the soul. When the soul has become mature in this sense, grace descends on her and transforms her; she then becomes God's target.

The expression *ḳuraiyen seyden* may also be taken to mean 'what offence have I committed?' Then, it would be praise in the form of blame (*ninda stuti*). The devotee-soul tells the Lord, 'What is the offence that I am guilty of? Why is it that you have chosen me as your target for destruction?'

26

gowthamar pōṭṭrum karuṇaimā malaiyē
kaḍaikkaṇit tālvā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! O Hill of Grace praised by Gautama! Save me by directing Thy gracious glance toward me.

According to the *Puranas*, Parvati once playfully closed the three eyes of her Lord, Siva, with her hands. Although this was only for a moment, it was a long period measured by our time. For this period, darkness enveloped the world and all life became extinct. In order to atone for her act, Parvati had to be born in this world; and having been born, she did *tapas* and offered worship to the Lord at Kanchipuram. Here she heard the voice of God directing her to proceed to Tiruvannamalai, and learn from Sage Gautama who had his

hermitage there, the discipline that would lead to her reunion with Siva. Parvati did as she was told and eventually gained identity with one half of the body of Siva. The reference in the present verse is to this story.

Gautama praised the Lord, having realized His true nature. Parvati heard this praise, her devotion became intense, and she merged with her Lord. The devotee-soul prays that she too should receive God's grace and be saved.

Note: Tiruchuzhi, the place where Bhagavan Sri Ramana was born, is also said to be presided over by Sage Gautama.

27

sakalamum vizhuṅguṅ kadiroḷi yinamana
jalaja malarttiyi ḍaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! The bright Sun that dost swallow up all the universe by Thy rays! Do open the lotus of my heart.

The word Arunachala itself means 'the Hill of Light', 'the Dawn Mountain'. Arunachala is the Light of lights, the Sun of suns. He is the Self-luminous Intelligence that is the ground of all existence. All shine after Him. Pervaded by His rays of light the world becomes meaningful and achieves its fulfillment.

The devotee-soul appeals to the Sun of suns to shine in her heart-lotus so that it may open and gain its purpose. The state of bondage is compared to the state of the lotus bud. Bondage is described as the knot of the heart (*hridaya granthi*).

To make the heart-lotus open, the Sun of wisdom should rise. When wisdom dawns, the heart blooms, breaking the bonds that had hitherto bound it.

The same idea is expressed by Sri Bhagavan in the first verse of the *Arunachala Pancharatnam*.

28

sāppā ḍunnaich chārnduna vāyān
sāntamāip pōva naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Resorting to Thee thinking that Thou art my food, I have become Thy food. May I now become quiescent!

One ordinarily believes in God for pragmatic reasons. Much of conventional religion makes of God an agent for distributing earthly favours. The devotee approaches God for the satisfaction of selfish ends. For instance, when one is in dire distress one thinks of God. This is much better than not to think of God at all. Even though one may start one's relations with God on a commercial basis, one finds that as one becomes intimate with God all finite ends cease to have value. As devotion matures, one no longer loves God for this or that gift; one realizes that God is all and nothing else is real; one, in short, gets consumed in God. What is the resultant gain ? Quiescence, peace (*santam*).

The word *santam* may mean also 'with end'. The meaning would then be one's individuality or ego finds destruction in God.

29

chittaṅ kuḷirakkadi rattamvait tamudavā
yaittiṛa varuṇmadi yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Moon of Grace! Make my mind cool with thy radiant hands and open the ambrosial orifice.

In verse 27, Arunachala was compared to the sun that makes the lotus blossom. Here the comparison is with the moon that opens the lily bud. God is the moon of grace that cools the mind parched up with the burning passions. He it is that can open the heart-lily and make it brim with the ambrosia of divine bliss.

30

sīrai yazhittunir vāṇamāch cheydarut
sīrai yaḷittaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Destroy my clothes, and stripping me naked, give me the clothing of grace.

The true nature of the soul is obscured because of the trappings that enclose her. Five sheaths (*kosa*) made of nescience (*avidya*) cover her: *annamaya* (physical body), *pranamaya* (vital air), *manomaya* (mind), *vijnanamaya* (intellect), and *anandamaya* (pseudo-bliss). Identifying herself with these, the soul goes through empirical life, utterly oblivious of her true nature as the pure Self. These have to

be discarded, and the soul should be reclaimed. The devotee soul prays to Arunachala to disrobe her and give her the clothing of His grace.

31

sugakkaḍal pongach cholluṇar vaḍaṅgach
chummā porundiḍaṅ garuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Be quiet, resting there (in my heart) so that the sea of happiness may surge and speech and thoughts cease.

God is implored here to take His residence in the devotee's heart. He may remain there quietly without doing anything. His mere presence will fill the soul with happiness. There will be an inundation of joy and all speech and thoughts will cease.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* describes *Brahman* as that whose body is space, whose nature is truth, whose delight is life, whose mind is bliss, and as that which is the fullness of peace and is eternal. It is also stated in the *Upanishad* that *Brahman* is that whence words and the mind return, not being able to reach it, and that he who knows the bliss of *Brahman* fears not at any time.

32

sūdusey dennaich chōdiya diniyun
jōthi yurukkāṭ ṭaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Without deceiving me and testing me anymore, show me thy luminous form.

God is the wielder of *maya*, the power of illusion. It is as governed by this power that the soul moves in the tract of transmigration. The *Bhagavad Gita* says:

God resides in the heart of every being and by His *maya* whirls them all, as though set on a machine. In Him alone seek refuge with all thy heart; by His grace will you attain the eternal state of supreme peace. (Chapter XVIII, verses 61-62)

Thus, the soul that is deluded by *maya* can be saved only by His grace. The devotee-soul that pants for divine grace appeals to the Lord to reveal His luminous form — the form that He showed to Brahma and Vishnu which even they were unable to measure or fathom. If even the celestials failed, how can the poor terrestrial soul succeed in passing the test. So, let not the Lord try her and find her wanting. His duty is simple and clear. He must save the devotee-soul by appearing before her as the Self-luminous Light.

33

seppaḍi viddaikaṭr rippaḍi mayakkuviṭ
ṭuruppaḍu viddaikāt ṭaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Reveal the science of perfection so that I may cease from deluding the world through learning the art of jugglery.

The power of *maya* is marvellous. It makes apparently possible what is in truth impossible. So it is, that *maya* is compared to magic. Within this cosmic magic, so many minor feats of magic are performed by ingenious man. He deludes himself as well as others. Believing that the world of plurality is real, he manipulates it and imagines that he has the power to work wonders. Not being satisfied with the miracles of science and empirical life, he sometimes seeks supernatural powers (*siddhis*). But no lasting good is to be gained by all such methods which only draw the soul away from her goal, and drag her into delusion all the more.

So, the devotee here, asks Arunachala to impart to her the knowledge of that technique which will make her perfect. This is the higher knowledge (*paravidya*) by means of which the Supreme Self is realized.

34

sērā yeninmey nīrā yurugikkaṇ
ṇīrāṭṛ ṛazhīvē naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! If thou dost not join me, my body will melt away, my eyes shed tears profusely, and I shall be destroyed.

The devotee-soul who has chosen Arunachala as her Lord pines for Him. If He will not respond, life will become insipid for her, and will not be worth living. In the world, people are prepared to die for worthless things such as wealth and fame. Who dies for God? The devotee's love of God is more intense than that of the worldling for the things of the world. Naturally, she feels that she must either get wedded to her Lord or perish. Of what use is the body if it does not serve as the locus of spiritual aspiration and progress? To live in a perpetual disconsolate state is worse than not to live. The devotee-soul gives expression to her inner wretched condition caused by the delay in the Lord's response to her loving appeal, and cries out that she is sure to be destroyed through emaciation and grief if the Lord did not come and save her in time.

35

chaiyenat taḷḷiṛ seyvinai suḍumalā
luyvagai yēdurai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! If Thou dost spurn me and reject me, my prarabdha will burn me. How then can I be saved, please tell me!

How can the Lord reject the appeal for succour made by the devotee-soul? If He rejects, what is to happen to her? The alternative is dreadful even to think of. There would be certain destruction for her. Destruction need not come from any source outside. Her own *prarabdha* would torment her. *Prarabdha* is that portion of the unspent deeds of the past that is responsible for the present birth. If God whose mercy is abundant does not come and save the soul, what is to be blamed except *prarabdha*? But, can *prarabdha* offset the flow of God's grace? In the case of Markandeya did the Lord not ward off death itself, and thus alter the so called unalterable fate? There is nothing impossible for the Lord. He can offer no excuses. If He will not save the soul, who will save her?

36

sollādu solinī sollara nillendṛu
chummā virundā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Saying without saying, stay without speech, Thou didst stay quiet.

In the previous verse, the devotee-soul implored the Lord with these words, 'How can I be saved, please tell me!' Here

the answer is revealed to her in silence. The devotee gives expression to this in the present verse.

Silence, not speech, is the means to get saved. Although speech and thought are required upto a stage, beyond that they are of no use. The Supreme Reality is beyond the realm of speech and thought. No word and no concept are adequate to express it. So, the real teaching about it is in silence. The Lord as Dakshinamurti adopts silence as the mode of communication with His disciples. *Maunopadesa* was the characteristic method of Bhagavan Ramana's teaching. There is not much point in the *guru* imploring the *sishya* to keep silent. The message of silence cannot be effectively imparted in speech. Hence, what the *guru* does is to say without saying. That is, he shows by example, the efficacy of silence; he makes silence eloquent. He remains quiet, not simply by not opening his mouth, but quiet in the deeper sense of the term, transcending all sense of duality. When there is duality, there will be speech, if not vocal, mental. The supreme teaching is that there is no duality. That is true silence.

37

sōmbiyāich chummā sugamuṇ ḍuṛangiḍiṛ
solvē ṛengati yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Without doing anything, remaining quiet, if I enjoy happiness and sleep, which is the way other than this? Please tell me.

The Lord Himself has shown the way to perfection. It is silence which is freedom from the sense of duality. Where

there is duality, there is disquiet, there is suffering. In the states of waking and dream where there is duality, one suffers even when there is apparent enjoyment. In deep sleep there is no duality, hence no suffering. The experience of unmixed happiness in sleep is evidenced by the fact that the one who gets up from sleep says, 'I slept happily; I did not know anything'. This does not mean, however, that the ideal state for one is to go to sleep. Sloth and slumber are not the characteristics of the native state of the Self. Sleep is not *sakshatkara*. It is true that in sleep, there is no duality and no misery; but there is still in that state the root of all misery, *viz.* ignorance. In order to distinguish the true transcendent state of the Self from its three empirical states of waking, dream and sleep, it is designated as *turiya* (the fourth). The *turiya*, however, is not the fourth in addition to, or succeeding, the three states. It indicates the eternal and basic nature of the Self. Giving an account of the *turiya*, Gaudapada declares: 'In the *turiya* there is no trace of ignorance; it is the light of intelligence that never fails. In it there is neither dream nor non-knowledge. It is Pure Consciousness which is the non-dual and Self-luminous reality.'

The *turiya* is the supreme goal. It is described as waking sleep (*jagrat-sushupti*) or sleeping without sleeping (*tungamal tunguvadu*). Bhagavan Ramana teaches in this stanza that to realize the *turiya* should be the objective of the devotee-soul.

Another meaning of this stanza is: 'If I sleep away in torpor and the bliss of ignorance, what means of salvation is there for me?'

38

sowriyaṅ kāṭṭinai sazhakkaṭra denḍrē
saliyā dirundā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou didst show Thy prowess; and as ignorance was destroyed, Thou hast remained without moving.

The prowess of Arunachala lies in His nature as the Self-effulgent sun of knowledge. In His presence there cannot be the darkness of ignorance. When He rises in our hearts, the ignorance located there is dispelled. Just as there is no real rising or setting of the sun, and only we turn towards or away from it, there is no movement for the Supreme Spirit. We imagine that He is away from us or comes into us. But when we realize that He is Arunachala, the Hill of Light that never moves, we get rid of the blinding darkness of delusion.

39

jnamaliyiṛ kēḍā nānen nurudiyā
nāḍinin nuṛuvē naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! By what strength can I, who am worse than a dog, approach Thee and attain Thee?

The devotee-soul realizes her smallness and helplessness in the glorious presence of Arunachala, her Lord. She deprecates herself by saying that she is worse than a dog. What right has a dog to demand entrance into a holy place? How

can the soul by her own effort reach the feet of the Lord? Even to be able to worship His feet, His grace is necessary.

All that the soul can and should do is to resign herself to the Lord's care. The Lord cannot escape, saying to the soul, 'You are unfit, get away!' It is His duty to make the soul fit and accept her.

An alternative meaning of the stanza is this:

> **O Arunachala! Am I worse than a dog? I shall, through persistent effort, seek Thee and attain Thee.**

Just as a dog, separated from its master, will put forth an untiring endeavour with the help of scent and track him down, so also the devotee-soul will not rest till she joins her Lord. The 'Who am I' inquiry will be the means whereby she will arrive at the goal.

40

jnānamil lādun nāśaiyāt ṭraḷarvaṛa
jnānam terittaru ḷaruṇāchalā

> **O Arunachala! In order that the weariness born of love for Thee without knowledge may go, please grant me knowledge.**

Love for God is good; but love without knowledge will only end in weariness of the soul. One may begin loving God even with wrong notions about His nature; but one will not realize the goal without the true knowledge of God. Since

the darkness of ignorance is what binds the soul, it is only the light of knowledge that will remove this bondage. To imagine that God is far away or that He is different from our true Self is not to understand what God is. When one acquires the liberating knowledge one realizes the non-dual Spirit. In the *Panchadasi* there is a simile which explains how weariness is caused by ignorance. Two travellers have come very near the destination. One of them knows that the destination is near, and the other does not know. The former is happy, while the latter is depressed. Ignorance thus causes weariness. Arunachala is our very Self. It is the realization of this truth that will free us from sorrow. The devotee-soul implores the Lord in this stanza to grant her divine knowledge.

Sri Krishna gave Arjuna the 'divine eye' in order that he may behold the All-Form which is the true form of the Lord. He declares that He discloses the way of knowledge to His devotees so that they may reach Him. 'Out of compassion for them', says the Lord, 'I who am their Self destroy the darkness born of ignorance by the blazing lamp of knowledge.'

41

jnimiṛupō nīyu malarndilai yendrē
nērnin dranaiyen naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala, the sun of wisdom! How is it that Thou too, like a bee, stayest before me (without opening me and entering into me) saying, 'You have not blossomed'?

At sunrise the lotus blossoms; the bee enters it to drink the honey. The bee will hover about without entering if the lotus remains unopened. Arunachala is not helpless like a bee. He is the sun of wisdom, possessing the power to make the heart-lotus of the devotee blossom forth. The devotee-soul tells the Lord that she will not accept His excuse that her heart has not opened. To make the heart mature is not beyond His power. How could He behave like a bee while He is the sun?

42

tattuvan teriyā dattanai yuṭrāi
tattuva miduven naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou sayest thus: 'Without knowing the truth (or, without hearing the text 'That thou art') you have attained that. This is the truth'.

The devotee-soul praises here the grace of the Lord which has enabled her to realize the truth without any formal instruction. The truth of non-difference — the truth that is taught in the *mahavakya*, 'That thou art' (*tat tvam asi*) — has come to her as a gift. And she asks the Lord Himself to proclaim this to the world. *Advaitanubhava*, the experience of non-duality, cannot come to one without the grace of God. Even the taste for *Advaita* (*advaita vasana*) has to arise in one out of God's grace alone (*isvaranugraha eva*). The devotee-soul rejoices at the fact that she has been granted the vision of truth by God out of His abundant love.

The first line of this stanza may also be rendered thus: 'You have attained the Lord who is beyond the reach of the principles (*tattvas*)'.

43

tānē tānē tattuva midanait
tānē kāṭṭuvā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Show Thou Thyself this truth, that Thou art the Self of all.

The Lord reveals His true nature as the Self of all. The Self is the basic reality, and that is God. Limited identifications of God with this or that form do not constitute the final truth. They are intended only for those who cannot grasp the All-Form of the Lord. In the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* where Sri Krishna enumerates for the benefit of Arjuna the various manifestations of His splendour (*vibhuti*) in the best of each species of beings, He makes it clear that in truth, He is the Self seated in the heart of all beings. Then He reveals His All-Form (*visvarupa*).

That the Self is the basic reality, may be understood, says the *Panchadasi*, even by an analysis of ordinary empirical usage. We say, for instance, 'Devadatta himself goes', 'you yourself see', 'I myself am not well', etc. Here self-hood (*svatva*) is common and constant, while the persons, *viz.* first, second and third, vary. It is this constant and abiding Self that is God.

44

tirumbi yahandanait dinamaha kaṇkāṇ
ṭeriyumen dranaiyen naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou taughtest thus: 'Turn the ego within and look constantly with the inner eye, and you will see.'

Having indicated the nature of the ultimate Truth, the way to realizing it is taught here. This teaching too comes from the Lord Himself. The way to realization lies through Self-inquiry. One has to turn away from the external objects towards which the ego ordinarily flows through the sense channels and direct the attention within. This is not exactly what is meant by introversion in psychology. It means the turning of the mind towards the source of its own light, which is the Self. This is true inwardness. When the attitude or inwardness becomes constant, the truth is revealed. The truth is that the Self that is God is the sole reality, the Self-luminous pure Awareness.

45

tīrami lahattiṛ ṭēḍiyun tanaiyān
tirumbavuṭr ṛēnaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Seeking Thee in the limitless heart, I have regained Thee. Hail Thy Grace!

The Lord has now taught that He is the Self residing in the heart of all beings and that Self-inquiry is the way to

reach Him. The devotee-soul here declares that she has sought Him and found Him, following the direction given. The search is inward search. The heart which is the location of the Lord is not the physical heart, but the spiritual heart, the limitless heart-ether (*daharakasa*). It is here that He is realized. He is ever there; but the soul is unaware of His Presence because of ignorance. When, as a result of the inward search the ignorance is destroyed, she discovers Him as her own inmost Self. This is regaining what was never really lost, discovering the eternal Truth.

If the expression *tiramil* (limitless) is read as *dhiramil* (without courage or strength), the meaning of the verse would be: 'I have searched for Thee within the heart without the requisite strength, and so I have come back to Thee, being defeated in my attempt. Please be gracious to me'.

46

tuppaṛi villā vippiṛap penpaya
noppiḍa vāyē naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Of what use is this birth without knowledge born through inquiry? And, why should I compare it to anything ?

To be born as a human being is rare. Of all the species of living beings, man has a privileged position. "Among living beings", says Sankara in the *Vivekacudamani*, "human birth is difficult to obtain" (*Jantunam nara janma durlabham*).

Human birth is even more precious than the status of the gods; for, while one may enjoy heavenly pleasures as a god on account of one's past meritorious deeds, one must be born again as a human being for acquiring fresh merit or for endeavouring to gain perfection. Man is particularly gifted with the ability to discriminate and inquire into the truth. And, since inquiry is the direct means to perfection (*moksha*), human birth is most precious. Having been born as a human being, one should not waste one's time and energy in pursuits that do not result in release from bondage. "If one knows here, then there is truth," declares the *Kena Upanishad*. "If one does not know here, there is great destruction." "Even while in this body," it is said, "knowledge should be gained; otherwise when the body is given up, *Brahman* would become very distant, indeed."

Having been born as a human being, if one does not strive to gain Self-knowledge, it is a great tragedy. Wasting precious human life in futile pursuits is "like boiling oil-cakes in a vessel made of emerald on fire fed by sandalwood as fuel, or like growing weeds in a farm which has been ploughed with a ploughshare made of gold, or like cultivating maize by using camphor as manure". So far as creaturely pursuits are concerned, there is no distinction between man and beast; the latter too eats, sleeps, and multiplies. The only distinction that man possesses is that he can know the truth. If he does not benefit by this special gift, his condition becomes more pitiable than that of the animals. Therefore, Bhagavan says in the present verse that such a futile life cannot be compared to anything—not even, say, to the life of a dog.

Oppida vayen: This phrase may be interpreted also thus: (1)O, Arunachala, I have not learnt to entrust (i.e. surrender) my ego to you; (2) I have not striven to remove the defect of neglecting Self-enquiry and make good my past remissness.

47

tūymana mozhiyar tōyumun meyyakan
tōyavē yaruḷen naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Be gracious so that I may sink in Thy true form, wherein sink those whose mind and speech are pure.

Union with God is not possible for those who are impure in mind, speech and body. Purity of heart is essential for those who seek to enter into the precincts of the Divine. Through the path of good works, through dedicated service (*karma yoga*), one should have the mind and heart cleansed. It is desire or passion that makes the mind impure. Inertia (*tamas*) and passionate activity (*rajas*) prevent the mind from reflecting the Self. So, the aspirant should free the mind from these defects and make it function in a disinterested and unattached manner. In other words, all selfish motives should be removed, and *sattva* should become the dominant nature of the mind. Even devotion to God should become unselfish; one has to dedicate action as well as the fruit thereof to God. As the *Bhagavad Gita* declares: "By worshipping God through one's allotted work, one gains fulfillment."

The saints are those who sink their egoity in the Divine; they are *santas* (the holy men), *nayanmars* (spiritual leaders), *alwars*, (those who are immersed in God-love). In the present verse, the devotee-soul prays to Arunachala that by His grace, and following the example of the saints, she could lose herself in Him.

tuymana mozhiyar: This phrase may also mean, "Those who have attained the state of mindlessness through purifying the mind."

48

deivamen ḍrunnaich chāravē yennaich
chēra vozhittā yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! I sought refuge in Thee as my God, and Thou didst destroy me utterly.

The devotee-soul approaches God with the assumption that God is the Other. But as devotion matures, the distance between the soul and God gets progressively reduced; and when there is complete self-surrender on the part of the soul, the soul discovers the eternal state of non-difference. Thus, *Advaita* experience is the goal of even *bhakti*. Devotion will not find its fulfillment until the ego is destroyed without residue. It is the self-loss in God that constitutes the truest Self-gain. When the devotee-soul gives herself up to God, what she receives in return is annihilation of the ego. Arunachala is *Hara*, the destroyer of all that is limited and divisive.

49

tēḍā duṭranaṭr tiruvaruḷ ṇidhiyahat
tiyakkan tīrttaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou art the treasure of Grace that has come to me without seeking; do remove my inner poverty consisting of delusion of the mind.

Here is a reference to Bhagavan's own experience of the Grace of Arunachala without any special effort on his part. The very mention of the name Arunachala quite early in life by a relative of his had fascinated him profoundly. After arriving at Tiruvannamalai as a lad of seventeen, he never felt any inclination to leave the place. Arunachala was all for him. Arunachala and he were not different.

In the present verse, Bhagavan makes the devotee-soul think of the infinite grace of the Lord that had drawn her irresistibly to Him. The Lord is the true wealth; this wealth alone can remove the inner poverty of the soul. Material wealth can only add to our troubles; it cannot give us peace. Hence Sankara asks us to consider wealth to be evil (*artham anartham bhavaya nityam*). The only value, and the highest value for the devotee is the grace of God. Having attained it, she longs for nothing else.

The second line of the verse may also mean: Cure the fretful wandering of my mind!

50

dairiya mōḍumun meyyaha nāḍayān
ṭaṭṭazhin dēnaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! With courage I sought to know Thy reality; but alas, I got destroyed in the process. Do bestow Thy grace on me.

Without God's grace, it is not possible to know Him truly. No amount of effort on the part of the devotee-soul will be able to discover God's nature. It is God that should reveal Himself. If one ventures on a voyage of the uncharted sea without guidance, one is sure to suffer shipwreck. So, the devotee realizes her initial mistake and appeals to God for help.

The salt-dog proudly walked into the sea boasting that he could measure its depth. But what happened was that he lost his identity and became one with the sea. The ego cannot size up God. Any such effort will end only in the dissolution of the ego. Until this happens God cannot be grasped.

51

toṭṭaruṭ kaimey kaṭṭiḍā yeniliyā
naṭṭamā vēnaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Unless Thou dost touch me with Thy gracious hand and embrace me, I shall be lost. Do bestow Thy grace on me.

One of the modes in which a preceptor initiates his pupil is through touch (*sparsadiksha*). The devotee-soul invites the Lord, here, to apply to her this particular mode of initiation. The touch of the Lord's hand is the touch of His grace. This is the beginning of a process whose end is the experience of non-difference. In the language of bridal mysticism this experience is described as 'embrace'.

The devotee's craving for God is so intense that she is sure she would perish if God does not respond. She pleads with Him not to neglect or ignore her. To whom could she turn if He would not come to her rescue?

52

tōḍamiḷ nīyahat tōḍonḍri yenrunsan
dōḍamon driḍavaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thou who art undefiled! Do bestow Thy grace on me so that I may always be happy, gaining union with Thee.

God is the sole undefiled reality. Defilements are caused by nescience, egoity and their brood. God is untouched by any of these. Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra* declares that God is untouched by hindrances or deeds or fruition or by latent deposits. The *Upanishads* say that the impurities of the world do not affect its source even as the defilements that are noticed in the sky do not belong to ether. God is eternally pure, awakened and released (*nitya-suddha-buddha-mukta-svabhava*). Hence, the devotee-soul addresses God here as

the 'undefiled'. It is the ever pure God alone that can save the soul by bestowing His Grace on her. What is the effect of the bestowal of Grace? It is the gaining of union with God. This is true happiness for the devotee-soul. This is called true happiness because it is unmixed with misery and is eternal. It is everlasting, unexcelled happiness (*nitya niratishaya ananda*). Realizing this happiness is the goal of bridal mysticism.

53

nagaikkiḍa milainin nāḍiya venaiyaru
ṇagaiyiṭṭup pārnī yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! There is no room for mocking at me. I have sought Thee. Adorn me with the ornament of Thy grace.

God should not reject the soul, thinking that she is plain looking, unadorned, ill-placed, etc. It is the worldly suitors that will look for embellishments in the bride. The mother of the groom may want money, the father, noble conduct, and the groom, good looks. But such considerations cannot weigh with God. He has no parents. He is the supreme Self-existent Lord. If the devotee-soul is unadorned, who is to blame? Who should adorn her and what is the adornment? It is God that should embellish her with the ornament of the highest price, *viz.* His grace. When grace envelopes the soul, she would became a beauty without par, fit to be accepted by the Lord. Let the Lord look at her with the eye of grace. He

would then detect in her no blemish. All that God has to do is to become the soul's beloved. Once the soul becomes the object of God's love, all her defects will vanish.

54

nāṇilai nāḍiḍa nānā yondrinī
tāṇuvā ninḍranai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! When, of my own accord, I sought Thee in order to become one with Thee, Thou didst stand like a pillar without shame.

In the language of bridal mysticism, this is love-quarrel. The soul quarrels with her Lord for not responding to her appeals. Relinquishing her natural sense of modesty, she approaches her Lord asking to be accepted. But she finds no response; the Lord stands unmoving like a pillar. Hence, she administers a rebuke to Him so that He may relent and respond.

The inner meaning of this verse is this: The Lord Arunachala is not other than the seeking soul. There is no difference between the seeker and the sought. The soul, on account of delusion, imagines that the Lord is the other and should be gained. When her inquiry yields its fruit, she discovers that He had all along been the inner reality or herself. He is unmoving (*achala*) because there is no place where He is not. He is all-pervading, full. The *Atharva Veda* calls Him *Skambha*, the support. According to a *Puranic* legend, Arunachala is the form of Siva as a pillar of light whose top and bottom ends Brahma and Vishnu were unable to discover.

55

ninneri yerittenai nīṛāk kiḍumun
ninnaruṇ mazhaipozhi yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Ere Thy fire burn me to ashes, do send a downpour of Thy grace.

Here may be seen the relation between devotion (*bhakti*) and knowledge (*jnana*). The ultimate Reality, *Brahman* or Arunachala, is of the nature of knowledge. It is knowledge of *Brahman* that burns away all *karma* with its cause which is nescience. The sacred ash is a symbol of the result of the burning away of all dross. The egoity which is a product of nescience is completely destroyed when the sun of wisdom rises. It gets reduced to ashes in the fire of knowledge.

The ego must, however, be rendered fit to receive the burning. It should get drenched in the rain of grace. Devotion accomplishes this preparatory task. The path of knowledge becomes easy to tread for the devotee who has received the grace of God.

56

nīnā naṛappuli nidaṅkaḷi mayamā
ninḍriḍu nilaiyaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Embrace me closely so that the 'I-Thou' distinction will cease, and grant me the states of eternal joy.

The culmination of bridal mysticism is the realization of non-duality. The true devotee does not desire to preserve

her individuality insulated as it were against God's being. The consciousness of the 'I-Thou' difference will persist only upto a point. When divine love matures, no trace of difference is left. God's embrace ends in destroying the ego. It is only when the sense of difference is totally overcome that true and eternal happiness is realized. Staying in one's real Self (*svasthya*), is happiness; one's real Self is God. *Brahman* is bliss; the Infinite alone is happiness. As long as a sense of difference persists, there can be no happiness.

57

nuṇṇuru vunaiyān viṇṇuru naṇṇiḍa
veṇṇalai yiṛumen ḍraruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! When will my thought-waves cease so that I may unite with Thy subtle being in the Heart-ether?

It is in the Heart-centre that the Supreme Reality shines Self-luminously as 'I-I'. Realization of this truth is described as union with God. This is the most subtle truth, and it cannot be realized so long as the mind streams out through the sense organs and gets disturbed and dissipated. 'Mind' is the name for the collection of functions such as thoughts, emotions, etc. These functions are compared to waves because of their violent movements. They come in quick succession with great fury and noise. It is only when these are subdued that, in the stillness of the Heart, the Supreme Truth of non-duality is realized. "Be still and know: I am God."

58

nūlaṛi vaṛiyāp pēdaiya nenḍran
mālaṛi vaṛuttaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Bestow Thy grace on me who am a fool without even the knowledge of scriptures, by destroying my delusion.

The knowledge of scriptures may yield a theoretical understanding of the truth. But, this by itself is not liberation. It is the intuitive insight that constitutes release. And this cannot be had except through divine grace.

The implication here is not that scriptural knowledge is of no value, or that it is not to be sought after. The meaning is that mere verbal knowledge of scripture is not enough. In certain rare cases, as in the case of Bhagavan Ramana, Self-realization may come even without formal study. What is essential, however, is that God should shower His grace on the devotee-soul. It is for this grace that she prays in the present verse. Nescience is destroyed through grace. Grace is the same as the highest knowledge which reveals the immutable, non-dual Reality.

Sri Krishna declares in the *Bhagavad Gita* (Chapter X, verses 8-20): "I am the source of all; from Me everything proceeds; knowing thus, the wise worship Me with intense devotion. With their minds fixed on Me, with their lives dedicated to Me, enlightening one another by speaking about Me, they ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those that are ever united with Me through

meditation, and worship Me out of love, I confer the *yoga* of wisdom through which they attain Me."

59

nekkunek kurugiyān pukkiḍa vunaippuha
nakkanā ninḍranai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Melting with intense devotion, when I entered Thee as my refuge, Thou didst stand naked!

The end of self-surrender is the same as that of Self-knowledge. It is the false self, the ego, that has to be destroyed, that has to melt away. The true Self, *Brahman*, is realized, when nescience has been removed. The dissolution of the ego in devotion, its self-loss in God, the sole refuge, results in Self-realization. The devotee starts with the assumption that God is the other, that God has a transcendent form etc. That is because the devotee-soul imagines that she herself has a distinct individuality. But as devotion matures and ends in total self-surrender, it dawns on the devotee that there is no reality other than God.

God is 'naked' in the sense that He is not conditioned, that He is non-dual, pure. All conditioning adjuncts are due to *maya*; they are not real; they are illusory projections. When the veil of *maya* has been lifted, the supreme Reality stands revealed as the immaculate, unconditioned Self.

60

nēśami lenakkun nāśaiyaik kāṭṭinī
mōśan seyyādaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Having roused love for Thee in me, who was without love, please do not deceive me.

The soul does not become a devotee easily. Her natural inclination is towards sense objects. If she has to be rescued, God's grace is necessary. So, the devotee-soul addresses the Lord here and says: "I was without love for You. The initiative did not come from me. You generated in me this divine hankering. If I hunger for you now, the responsibility is yours. Having aroused in me this new love, you should not desert me. If you do not accept me and satisfy my soul-hunger, you will be guilty of practising deceit. If men deceive, one may understand; how can God be deceitful?"

This only shows the devotee-soul's intense longing for the Lord, and her impatience which will not brook delay. And, the Lord's play of hide-and-seek is evidently designed to make the soul's longing all the more intense.

61

naindazhi kaniyā nalanilai padatti
nāḍiyuṭ koḷnala maruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! It is no good tasting an over-ripe fruit, One should eat a fruit that is in proper ripeness.

The devotee-soul compares herself to a fruit that is just fit to be eaten. If the Lord delays in coming to her, it will be like the action of a gardener who gathers over-ripe fruit. In the language of bridal mysticism, the bride is ready for the groom, and this is the right time for her to be enjoyed; if the groom does not come now but delays, he would only meet with bitterness. A love that has lost its warmth cannot be the source of delight. The devotee-soul may lose interest in God if He does not respond at the proper time. So, she appeals to Him not to lose time, but to come to her rescue immediately, at just the right time.

62

nondiḍā dunḍranai tandenaik koṇḍilai
yantaka nīyenak karuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Hast Thou not taken me, giving Thyself to me, unimplored? Thou art, verily, Death to me!

The devotee-soul here, sings the praise of the limitless mercy of the Lord. Taking her unto Himself, He has given Himself unto her. What kind of a barter is this? The soul has nothing to lose, and has everything to gain! Saint Manikkavachakar addressing the Lord, says: "You have given Yourself to me, and have taken me instead, O Sankara! Tell me, who is wise? I have gained eternal bliss; what have You gained from me?"

If *antaka* is read as *andhaka*, the meaning would be: 'You must be blind! Even without my asking and my deserving, You have taken me, and given Yourself to me.'

By taking me, You have destroyed me. Thus, You have become Death (*antaka*) to me. You have killed my ego, without subjecting me to any suffering (*nondidadu*) in the process. The death of the ego is a precondition to gaining the life eternal.

63

nōkkiyē karudimey tākkiyē pakkuva
mākkinī yāṇḍaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Save me, after making me fit through look, thought and physical contact.

In verse 61, the devotee-soul declared that she was just fit to be enjoyed by the Lord, like a fruit which was in proper ripeness. Here in the present verse, she says that even if she were to be regarded as unfit, it is the duty of the Lord to make her fit. It has already been stated that the initiative comes from the Lord, that even the soul's inclination towards God is caused by God (see verses 60 and 62).

Then clearly, God is under an obligation to render the soul fit to receive His grace. Maturation is made possible through spiritual initiation (*diksha*). God appears as the Master (*guru*) and initiates the disciple. Three types of initiation are mentioned — through sight, through thought, and through touch (*chaksu diksha*, *bhava diksha*, and *hasta*

dikṣha). The three types are analogous, respectively, to the modes of hatching the eggs by the fish, the tortoise, and the bird. The fish is said to hatch the eggs by look, the tortoise by thought, and the bird by physical contact. Similarly, the *guru* initiates the disciple through sight, contemplation, or touching the disciple's head with his hand (*hasta-mastaka-samyoga*).

If the devotee-soul is so low that none of the three modes be considered to be enough by itself, then, let all the three modes be applied in order that she may be saved. Here, the devotee claims her right to be saved, which involves on the part of God the corresponding duty of saving.

64

paṭrimāl viḍantalai yuṭriru munamaruḷ
paṭriḍa varuḷpuri yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Before I perish on account of the poison of maya, which has gripped me, reaching my head, please shower Thy grace on me, so that I may seek Thy grace.

Maya is the root cause of metempsychosis and misery. It is compared to a serpent whose poison is deadly. The comparison is apt, because the usual example given in *Advaita* texts, of illusion is the rope-serpent. Nescience (*avidya*) is another name for *maya*. On account of nescience, the truth remains veiled and the non-truth gets projected. The means for removing nescience is Self-knowledge. In order to gain

this, God's grace is essential. Hence the devotee-soul prays here for grace. Nescience is death; Wisdom is life. Those who are governed by nescience are spiritually dead (*atmahano janah*). Enlightenment leads to the life eternal. For getting enlightenment, one has to deserve divine grace.

"Before I perish on account of *maya*", pleads the devotee-soul, "save me through Your grace."

65

pārttaruṇ mālaṛap pārttilai yeninaruḷ
pārunak kārsolva raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Do see and grant Thy grace so that maya may be destroyed. If Thou dost not see and bestow grace, who in this world could tell Thee?

God's essence is grace. Bestowal of grace is His inalienable function. This function must necessarily take place with reference to the devotee-soul. If God does not come to the aid of the devotee-soul, to whom else could she turn? Who in this world, or in any other world, is there that can speak to God on behalf of the devotee-soul? Even if such a one could be found, why should God be told of what His natural function is? Should any one tell fire that it should burn? Does a mother require to be told that she should protect and nourish her child? The devotee-soul has no doubt at all that God will shower His Grace and save her from *maya*.

66

pittuviṭ ṭunainēr pittanāk kinaiyaruḷ
pittan teḷimarun daruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Making me get rid of the madness (for sense-pleasures), Thou hast made me directly become mad for Thee. Now, give me through Thy grace the remedy for overcoming this madness.

Madness for sense-pleasures is what is called lust. Madness for God is what is known as devotion. The technique of getting rid of the former is by replacing it with the latter. God is to be put in the heart where earlier the sense objects had dominated. Or rather, the flow of the mind should be turned towards God from its course which tends towards sense pleasures. *Isvara kama* (love of God) should take the place of *vishaya kama* (love of sense objects). This is *bhakti*. Madness for God also implies imperfection in so far as it involves a sense of separateness. It is to be used for the purpose of counteracting the madness for sense-pleasures, even as a thorn is employed for removing another thorn. But even God-madness should be transcended, in the sense that the goal of non-duality should be gained. The final Self-realization is the remedy for God-madness. And, this remedy is to be had through God's grace.

67

bīthiyi lunaichchār bīthiyi lenaichchēr
bīthiyun ḍranakkē naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Without fear I have sought to reach Thee that art fearless. Then why art Thou afraid of being united (with me)?

It requires great courage for anyone to leave the lure of sense-pleasures and to seek to be united with God. Such a one is the true hero (*dhira*). The devotee-soul feels happy that she has escaped from the clutches of sense objects and has learnt to rely on God as the sole refuge. There can be no fear in God. God is fearless because He is non-dual. It is only where there is duality that there can be fear. The devotee soul longs for the realization of non-duality which is fearlessness. God should welcome this. Why, then, does He hesitate to accept the soul? Does it mean that He is afraid? What reason is there that He should be hesitant? So, the devotee-soul pleads with the Lord that He should fulfil her longing without delay.

The first line may also be rendered thus: Frightened by sense objects, I have sought to be united with Thee that art fearless.

68

pullaṛi vēdurai nallaṛi vēdurai
pulliḍa vēyaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Which is wrong knowledge? Say, which is right knowledge? And, bestow Thy grace so that I may attain the latter.

Ignorance is not mere absence of knowledge. It is perverted or wrong knowledge. It veils the real Self and projects the non-real world. Thus it becomes the root cause of bondage. The removal of ignorance is through right knowledge — knowledge of the non-dual Self. It is the immediate experience of the Truth that releases the individual from its individuality and enables it to realize its non-difference from the Self.

In order to gain this final goal, the devotee-soul prays for God's grace. Even to be able to distinguish between right and wrong knowledge, the guidance of God or *guru* is necessary. The venom of error consists in its posing to be truth. In order to unmask error, one has to gain wisdom which results from divine grace. When wisdom is gained, there is no duality any longer, no sorrow.

69

bhūmaṇa māmanam pūraṇa maṇaṅgoḷap
pūraṇa maṇamaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Let this mind, which is (now) attached to the world, get attached to the Whole and become wedded to the Whole! Do bestow Thy grace!

What occupies the mind in the state of ignorance is the non-real world of which it itself is a part.

The world fills the mind; the world is too much with it. It is on account of this that there is misery, endless suffering. The way to remove misery lies in detaching the mind from the world and attaching it to God who is the Whole (*purna*). When the Whole occupies the mind — in the language of bridal mysticism, when the mind is married to God — the mind gets dissolved, and what remains is the non-dual *Brahman* — bliss experience.

Purana manam which means 'plenary marriage' or 'marriage with the plenum' is the consummation of the life divine. It is the same as *advaita anubhava* (non-dual experience).

70

peyarninait tiḍavē piḍittizhut tanaiyun
perumaiyā raṛivā raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! When I merely thought of Thy name, Thou didst drag me unto Thyself. Who can know Thy greatness!

The mere thought of Arunachala is believed to be efficacious in releasing the soul from bondage. Ramana, as a young lad, heard the name 'Arunachala' uttered casually by an elderly relative. Without any ostensive reason, he was attracted to Arunachala; and he made the epic journey to the Sacred Hill, after reaching which he had no desire to go anywhere. He lived in Arunachala for the rest of his life.

Arunachala waits only for a pretext to save the devotee-soul. It is enough if she remembers the name; and there the Lord comes to claim her. The devotee-soul is dragged even without her will — dragged away from worldly attachments, and unto the Lord's being. Such is the transcendent greatness of Arunachala! It is beyond measure, beyond description.

71

pēyttanam viḍaviḍāp pēyāp piḍittenaip
pēyanāk kinaiyen naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! In order that my (low) ghostly nature may leave, Thou, as the obstinate ghost, hast possessed me and made me behave like a ghost.

The ego is the base ghost that possesses the soul. In order that this ghost may be driven away, God must possess the soul. The soul was world-mad formerly; now it becomes God-mad. Possession by the evil spirit is displaced by possession by the highest Spirit, God. When the soul becomes God-possessed she behaves like a child, or a lunatic or one possessed (*bala-unmatta-pisachavat*).

The devotee-soul wonders at the new life that has come to her as a result of God's grace. Her new madness is an elevating experience. Her new possession is what will save her and make her whole. Those who wallow in worldliness may call her mad. But if this be madness, then madness has value, and not sanity.

72

paiṅkoḍi yānān paṭrinḍri vāḍāmaṛ
paṭrukko ḍāykkā varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Do protect me like a supporting pole so that I may not wither away like a tender creeper that has no support!

Without a tree or supporting pole, a creeper cannot survive. What gives strength to the creeper and makes it grow is the supporting tree or pole. Similarly, the devotee-soul cannot subsist without God. God is her mainstay and support. So, she appeals to God praying that He should not forsake her. *Maya* and *samsara* are powerful forces that create adverse conditions. If the devotee-soul should battle against them and succeed, she must have God's constant and unfailing support.

Among the analogies for mind's devotion to God given by Sankara in the *Sivanandalahari* is that of a creeper entwining a tree (*lata kshitiruham*).

73

poḍiyān mayakkiyen bōdattaip paṛittun
bōdattaik kāṭṭinai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Stupefying me, as if with magic powder, Thou hast taken away my intelligence and shown me Thy wisdom.

The soul's intelligence is in fact, no intelligence; it is nescience. It is ignorance posing as knowledge. Hence, its removal is difficult. Only God's Grace can help to remove it. Grace can work wonders like magic powder. The magician strews some wonder powder on the patient; the patient loses his initiative and will, and becomes an instrument in the hands of the magician. He no longer sees with his own eyes; he sees with the eyes of the magician. Similarly, the Lord who is the

greatest magician (*mayin*) overpowers the devotee-soul with His magic spell, grace, so that the soul may have her ignorance, which is mistaken as intelligence, destroyed. When this is done, God's wisdom, which is the supreme knowledge, is revealed to the soul. Here, there are not the distinctions of seer, seen, sight and object. This knowledge is not a modification of the mind. It is Pure Awareness (*chin-matra*) which is God, the Self.

74

pōkkum varavumil poduveḷi yinilaruṭ
pōraṭṭankāṭ ṭaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! In the common space, where there is neither going nor coming, show me the battle that is waged by grace.

The common space here spoken of is the limitless non-dual Reality, *Brahman*. The ether of the heart is a symbol for it. Here, there is no bondage, no duality, no birth, no death. It is the region beyond transmigration. *Brahman* is the Infinite, unlimited Reality (*bhuman*). Since there is no duality there, there is no question of going and coming. Birth and death, and all change can belong only to individuals. But there is no individualism in *Brahman* which is one only, without a second (*ekam, eva, advitiyam*). Gaining this *Brahman* is the goal of life.

How is it to be gained? By battling against and conquering plurality, or the notion of plurality and its cause,

nescience. This battle can be successfully waged only with the help of God's grace. The devotee-soul here prays for a sight of this battle royal between the darkness of ignorance and the light of wisdom, the success of the latter assured with the help of divine grace, which is only another name for wisdom.

75

bhautika māmuḍaṛ paṭraṭru nāḷumun
bhavisukaṇ ḍuravaru laruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Rid of the attachment to the body made of the elements, let me ever behold Thy splendour and be united with it through Thy grace!

What conditions the soul and makes it limited is its attachment to the body. The body and the mind are products of the elements which constitute the not-self. On account of nescience the soul thinks, 'I am the body; the body is mine'. It is this false identification that involves the soul in transmigration. When this false identification is removed, the soul realizes its true being in the non-dual Reality, *Brahman*. *Brahman* is *sat*, *chit*, *ananda*, the supreme splendour. The soul is the same splendour apparently imprisoned. When this imprisonment is removed through grace which is the same as knowledge, the soul realizes the truth of non-duality.

76

malaimarun diḍanī malaittiḍa vōvaruṇ
malaimarun dāyoḷi raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! When Thou dost administer medicine for delusion, why should I (continue to) be deluded? Be Thou resplendent as the Gracious Hill of Medicine!

Delusion, ignorance, is the cause of bondage. That is the basic malady from which the soul suffers. God administers the cure for this malady. He is Himself the physician (*bhishak*) and the medicine (*bheshajam*). That being so, why should the soul despair? The ultimate Reality in the form of the Aruna Hill is the supreme medicine for the soul's illness. The mere thought of it will cure the root disease of bondage.

Alternative meaning of the words: *malaimarun didani malaittidavo*: Thou who hast the Daughter of the Mountain (Parvati) on Thy left side! Why shouldst Thou shrink from administering the medicine that will cure the disease of delusion?

77

mānaṅkoṇ ḍurubavar mānattai yazhittabhi
mānamil lādoḷi raruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Having destroyed the conceit of those who are conceited Thou shinest without conceit!

The soul's conceit in the body and the world makes for its bondage. It is the conceit of 'I and mine' placed in the body and the world that constricts the soul and throws it into the tract of transmigration. The way to save the soul is to rid it of its conceit. This is accomplished through God's grace. Freedom from conceit is the mark of limitlessness. God who is the non-dual Reality has no conceit. It is by realizing the grand identity that one becomes free from conceit.

78

minjiḍiṛ kenjiḍuṅ konja vaṛivaniyān
vanjiyā daruḷenai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! As I am parviscient, I cringe only when overpowered; without deceiving, bestow Thy grace on me!

Self-conceit is a consequence of parviscience. The ego gets puffed up and overestimates its importance. Not knowing its impotence, it imagines that it is all-powerful. When hard experience knocks on its head and humiliates it, the ego cringes and craves for the sake of self-preservation. Realizing the worthlessness of the ego, the devotee-soul prays to God for the bestowal of His grace so that she may be saved from the guiles of the ego.

79

mīkāma nillāman mākāṭ ṭralaikala
mākāmaṛ kāttaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Protect me so that I may not flounder like a storm-tossed pilotless vessel.

The soul is like a vessel on a troubled sea caught in a fierce storm. On the uncharted sea of *samsara*, the soul drifts without any sense of direction or purpose. The winds of desire carry it whithersoever they blow. The vessel of the soul is without a pilot. In such a condition, it is doomed to destruction. What will save the soul from its doom is God's grace. When God becomes the pilot and His grace the rudder, the soul will not suffer shipwreck, however fierce the storm may be and however agitated the sea.

80

muḍiyaḍi kānā muḍiviḍut tanainēr
muḍiviḍak kaḍanilai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! The knot of ignorance whose beginning or end cannot be traced, Thou hast to untie, like a mother. I cannot untie it by myself.

The knot of ignorance is the cause of bondage. It is called knot because it mixes the true with the untrue, and mistakes the one for the other. It is beginningless and endless

in the sense that the soul that is bound by it cannot understand its limits or ends. So, how can it untie the knot unaided? It is only the Lord that can undo this knot. As a mother hastens to the succour of her child, so let the Lord through His infinite grace liberate the soul from the coils of ignorance.

81

mūkkilan munkāṭṭu mukuramā gādenait
tūkki yaṇaindaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Without being as a mirror held before a noseless person, lift me up and embrace me.

The devotee-soul knows full well her own deficiencies. Let not the Lord humiliate her by showing these up. A face without a nose will be awful to look at. There could be no greater insult to a noseless man than to make him look at the reflection of his own face in a mirror. The Lord cannot behave like a finite individual, and distinguish between the beautiful and the ugly, the blemishless and the defective. It is His duty to remove the defects of the soul. There is nothing which His grace cannot accomplish. The devotee-soul prays to God that He should embrace and save her.

82

meyyahat tinmana menmala raṇaiyinā
meykalan diḍavaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Do bestow Thy grace so that we may lie in union on the bed of tender flowers, the mind, in the inner sanctuary of the body.

This is the language of bridal mysticism. The devotee-soul pines for union with the Lord. The location where the union is realized is the heart. The heart should first be made a fit place for receiving the Lord. It is no use inviting Him to a location that is rough and hard. Let the heart be rendered soft and fragrant. Then, let the soul entreat the Lord to come in and embrace her. Expressed in the language of *Advaita*, when nescience, the root obstacle, is removed, when the knot of the heart is cut, the grand identity is realized.

83

mēnmēṭr tāzhndiḍu melliyarch sērndunī
mēnmaiyuṭ ṭranaiyen naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! How is it that by uniting with the meek who belittle themselves all the more, Thou hast risen high?

True devotees are extremely humble. There is not the least trace of pride in them. The deeper their devotion, the greater becomes their humility. The Lord rushes to the succour of the devotees. He is prepared to go to any lengths for sustaining and saving them. Thereby is His greatness exhibited. It may be truly said that He is subservient to the devotee (*bhakta-paradhina*). His splendour lies in descending

from His exalted place and lifting the soul from the slough of sordidness and sorrow. The deeper He descends, the greater is the manifestation of His splendour.

In the language of bridal mysticism the verse could also be taken to mean: Thou hast liaison with so many women, and yet Thou remainest pure.

84

maimaya nīttaruṇ maiyinā lunaduṇ
maivaśa mākkinai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Removing the darkness of delusion through applying the unguent of Thy grace, Thou hast truly made me Thine.

The delusion born of *avidya* is the blindness of the soul. It is the darkness that veils the truth. The remedy that will remove the blindness is the unguent of the Lord's grace. When the Lord applies this magic ointment, the scales covering the soul's vision fall, and the soul is enabled to see the truth. Under the spell of delusion the soul had imagined that she belonged to the not-self, the anti-God. Now that the delusion has been destroyed through divine grace, she knows the truth that she inalienably belongs to God.

85

moṭṭai yaḍittenai veṭṭa veḷiyinī
naṭṭamā ḍinaiyen naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Shaving my head clean, Thou didst dance in the open space (of my Heart). What a wonder!

Shaving the head signifies renunciation of the ego. Shorn of the ego, the heart becomes a fit place for the Lord's manifestation.

His dance is the expression of the unexcellable bliss that constitutes His nature. In the *chidakasa* (*chidambara*) Nataraja performs the dance of joy. One beholds it when one loses oneself.

The variant reading *mottaiyazhittu* has also the same meaning: destroying the ego.

So long as the ego lasts, there cannot be real happiness. It is when the ego is destroyed that the non-dual bliss is realized.

86

mōhan tavirttun mōhamā vaittumen
mōhantī rāyen naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Removing my deluded attachment (to sense objects), Thou hast made me attached to Thee. Yet, why hast Thou not removed this attachment ?

It is by a sort of homoeopathic treatment that the world-disease of the soul is to be remedied. The root of the soul's disease is attachment to sense objects. Attachment to the finite, and the fleeting cannot yield real happiness. Under the spell of delusion the soul imagines that the objects are the sources of its joy and gets attached to them. In order that the soul may be saved from sorrow, it must be detached from the objects. This may be done in several ways. But the surest and safest way is to make the soul attached to God. God-love is the potent remedy for curing the malady of lust for objects. For cultivating the love of God, God's grace is absolutely necessary. It is by His grace that He has to be worshipped. The soul's journey to its goal, however, should not stop with the establishment of worshipper-worshipped relation with God. While the relation with the divine serves to remove the relation with the undivine, it itself cannot be left unsublated. The worshipper-worshipped relation sublimates all other relations.

And, that itself gets transcended in *Advaita* experience. It is for this state of transcendence that the devotee-soul prays in the present verse.

87

mowniyāik kaṛpōn malarā dirundān
maunami dāmō varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! If one be silent without speech, like a stone, would this be silence?

If external silence were the *sine qua non* of wisdom, the dumb ones would be the most wise. Nay, the state of perfection would have to be compared to that of a stone. Conscious control of speech is no doubt a valuable discipline. But one should not mistake speechlessness for enlightenment. True silence is stillness of the mind. Here mental stillness means rendering the mind calm and unperturbed. In fact, genuine silence is the plenary experience called *upasanta*, the supreme quietude. This is *mauna* in the proper sense of the term.

88

yavanen vāyin maṇṇinai yatti
yenpizhaip pozhitta daruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Who was it that threw mud into my mouth and robbed me of my living?

This is *nindastuti*, praise in the guise of blame. The transmigrating soul feasts on the objects of sense; it derives its sustenance from nescience. It imagines poison to be food and seems to thrive on it. God reclaims the soul by turning it away from sense objects and by destroying nescience.

The devotee-soul praises the saving grace of the Lord. 'Throwing mud into the mouth' means denying food; and 'robbing one of one's living' means taking away the means of sustenance. The Lord's grace makes ruinous life and false existence impossible.

89

yārumaṛi yāden madiyinai maruṭṭi
yevarkoḷai koṇḍa daruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Stupefying my mind without any one knowing it, who was it that ravished me?

The Lord is the arch-thief of the devotee's heart. He comes without being seen by any. Is He not the invisible Indweller of all beings? He knows all; and no one can know Him. He is the knower of all knowing, seer of all seeing.

In the state of bondage the soul is under the spell of the world of plurality. This false charm is overpowered by the superior charm of the Lord's grace. He comes, comes, ever comes, silently and stealthily, in order to redeem the soul and grant it the joy of divine union. The devotee-soul marvels at the limitless mercy of the Lord, His unbounded solicitude for the soul.

90

ramaṇanen ḍruraittēn rōshaṅ koḷādenai
ramittiḍach cheyavā varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! As Thou art my ravishing Lord, I said all this. Without taking any offence, do Thou come and make me happy!

The devotee-soul has been taking liberties with the Lord. She has been cutting jokes, mocking at Him, and even scolding Him. She now reflects on her conduct and fears that she

might have exceeded her limits. She pleads with the Lord not to get offended and displeased with her behaviour. All her extravagance was prompted by love and love alone. She has no grouse against the Lord whose grace is spontaneous. So, she entreats Him to come and bless her. If she has used any harsh words, it is to make Him come, and not to drive Him away. In fact, how can He be driven away, since He is the inner immortal ruler.

91

rāppaga lillā veṛuveḷi vīttil
ramittiḍu vōmvā varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Come, we shall enjoy one another in the House of Pure Space (i.e. Heart-ether) where there is neither night nor day.

Here, in this verse, the devotee-soul invites the Lord to come into the house of her heart which is the fittest place for her to enjoy the bliss of non-duality with Him. The heart-ether is pure and unsullied, unlike the mind-ether and the element-ether. The latter two are manifestations of *prakṛti*, *maya*. The heart-ether is Pure Consciousness. In it there is neither the mind, nor are there ether and other elements.

The Tamil *vidu* means 'house' and also 'the state of renunciation' or 'liberation'. The 'heart' is the reality where one has been liberated from egoity, etc. It is the state of quiescence, where there is no duality. It is the timeless experience where there is no day or night. The devotee-soul

longs for this experience where she will be one with her Lord.

92

latchiyam vaittaru ḷastiram viṭṭenaip
batchittāi prāṇano ḍaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Making me the target, Thou hast released the weapon of Grace at me, and hast devoured me alive.

In an *Upanisadic* text it is said: '*Pranava* (Om) is the bow; the Self verily is the arrow; and *Brahman* is stated to be the target. It has to be hit unerringly, and like the arrow, one must become of the nature of that'. The same truth is implied in the present verse, only the relation is reversed, as the language employed is the language of bridal mysticism. The soul is the target; the arrow is the grace; and the one who takes the aim is the Lord. The Hound of Heaven comes hunting for prey, and will not leave the latter without destroying it completely. But, this destruction is what the devotee devoutly wishes for. She is only too willing to offer herself as food to be consumed by God. The consummation of joy lies in the complete annihilation of the ego.

93

lābanī yihapara lābami lenaiyuṭṭru
lābamen nuṭṭranai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! The supreme gain art Thou. By accepting me who am without earthly gain or heavenly profit, what hast Thou gained?

Arunachala, the Godhead is the soul's final goal (*parama-purusartha*), the supreme end. Since God has no desires to be fulfilled, He has nothing to gain. He is the Self-established, Self-luminious All-full Reality. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "There is nothing in the three worlds for Me to do; nor is there anything to be attained that has not been attained; yet I continue to work" (Chapter III, verse 22). The work that God does is to save the souls by a shower of His grace. Even the best of souls has some demerit or other. No soul can claim that it has gained all that it desired to gain. The devotee-soul realizes her own unworthiness. God has nothing to gain by accepting her. That He has accepted her only shows His abundant mercy.

One of the *Saiva* Saints, Manikkavachaka sings: "What thou hast given is Thyself; and what Thou hast gained is myself. O Sankara, of the two of us, who is the knowing one? I have obtained the bliss that knows no end; what hast Thou gained from me?"

94

varumbaḍi solilai vanden paḍiyaḷa
varundiḍun ṭalaividhi yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Didst Thou not ask me to come? I have come. Now, Thou hast to measure out (for my maintenance). If Thou shouldst suffer, it is Thy fate.

Saving the souls even by force, and without their conscious will, is what God's grace does. The call of God is there, ever for the soul. In the case of the rare soul, there is ready response to this call. The devotee has come to God at His call. He cannot now disown her saying that she must suffer her lot. Has fate any power as against God's will? God has called the devotee-soul, and it should be His lot, even if it is hard to bear her burden.

Sri Sankara says, in the *Sivanandalahari* (verse 15), addressing the Lord of souls, "If Thou art not indifferent (towards my lot), why is it that Thou dost not destroy the decree of Brahma (in regard to me) that makes me turn away from meditating on Thee, and that fills me with evil desires? If Thou art powerless how was that head of Brahma, which cannot be plucked with a thumb-nail and which is hard, plucked effortlessly by Thee with the merest tip of Thy thumb-nail?"

In Hindu mythology, the deity that decrees fate is Brahma the creator. According to legend, Brahma had originally five heads. But Siva plucked off one of them. The *Varaha Purana* says that Brahma created Rudra and asked him to protect

the world. While doing so, Brahma addressed Rudra as *kapali*, a term of insult. Rudra got angry and plucked off Brahma's fifth head with his thumbnail. That only a thumb or the merest tip of it was used for severing the head of Brahma emphasizes the immense power of God Siva to whom the verse is addressed.

God cannot throw the blame on fate and keep quiet. For, is He so powerless that He cannot set it right? What can really stand against the might of God? What can fate do as against the grace of God?

Sri Krishna has made this promise in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

> Those people who worship Me truly, thinking Me to be non-different (i.e. as the non-dual Self) — for them that are ever united in thought with Me, I bear the responsibility of securing what they want and protecting what they have (Chapter IX, verse 22).

The following story is illustrative of the truth as taught in this verse: Once upon a time, there were two brothers. The elder was given to the practice of penances; the younger was the bread winner. The younger would bring home everyday, provisions and other household articles and give them to his wife. That lady would share the provisions with the wife of the elder brother. The latter would do the cooking etc. and keep the food ready by noon, when her husband would come back from the river-side where he performed his penances. His wife would serve him with food. He would offer the food to God, and then partake of it. Immediately he would return to the river-bank to resume his penances. This

went on everyday, for a long time. At long last, the wife of the younger brother was put out at what she considered to be the vegetative and wasteful life of her brother-in-law. She stopped supplying provisions to her sister-in-law. When the austere brother came home that noon, there was no food. Without eating he repaired to the river-side for his meditations. The same thing happened the next day. But before going back for his devotions, he took out the text of the *Bhagavad Gita* and opened the page which contained the verse which says that God attends to the welfare of those people who constantly think of Him as non-different. He thought that these were not the Lord's words and that the verse should have been interpolated. So, he scored it out, and went back to the river-bank. When he had gone, the Lord Hari went to his home with cartloads of provisions and wealth, delivered them to the lady and disappeared. The lady hurried to the bank of the river, met her husband, and related to him what had happened. The pious man went home, beheld the wondrous doings of the Lord, took out the text of the *Bhagavad Gita* again, and wrote with his own hand the expunged verse.

The lesson of the story is that the sincere aspirant has nothing to be worried about, not even about his subsistence in the body. Dread, anxiety, etc. can have no place in his mind. His is the truly carefree life. His only concern is with his spiritual progress. He should look upon the world, including his body, as the superimposed appearance on the non-dual Self.

95

vāven ḍrahampukkun vāzhvaru ḷanḍrēyen
vāzhvizhan dēnaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! The day when Thou didst say 'Come' and I by Thy grace entered along with Thee into the Heart, that very day I lost my individual life. This is Thy grace!

It is when the ego is lost that Self is gained. And, the gaining of the Self is due to the grace of the Self. The ego is a mere phantom created by nescience. When this is destroyed there remains only the resplendent Self shining in the Heart. The devotee-soul pines for union with the Lord, the Supreme Self. When she enters into the Heart-centre with her Lord, her ego gets annihilated completely. She finds her Self by losing her self. Separated existence is the cause of misery; when this is realized to be an illusory manifestation, misery disappears and there is the experience of unexcellable bliss.

96

viṭṭiḍiṛ kaṭṭamām viṭṭiḍā dunaiyuyir
viṭṭiḍa varuḷpuri yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! If I give up (Thy rememberance at the time of death), I shall have trouble (and be born again). Do shower Thy grace that I may die without giving up (remembering Thee).

The last thoughts are the most important ones; for it is they that determine the soul's future. Jada Bharata had to be

born as a deer, inspite of his earlier austerities, because his last thoughts were centred round the pet deer he had been bringing up. The devotee-soul prays that her last thoughts should be on the Lord. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

Thinking of whatever object one leaves the body at the time of death, that and that alone one attains, deeply engrossed in the thought thereof (Chapter VIII, verse 6).

He who departs from the body, thinking of Me alone, even at the time of death, attains My state; in regard to this there is no doubt (Chapter VIII, verse 5).

The last thoughts will depend upon those which one habitually thinks. Therefore, one should always think of God, if one's last thoughts should be about God.

97

vīḍuviṭ ṭīrttuḷa vīḍupukkup paiyavun
vīḍukāt ṭinaiyaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Dragging me out of my house (the ego), Thou hast made me enter into the Heart-home, and slowly Thou hast shown me That itself as Thy home. Such is Thy grace.

The ego is the false 'I'. It is this which binds the soul. By God's grace the devotee is liberated from the constricting bondage forged by egoity. She enters the Heaven of the Heart-ether which is the house of God, the seat of the true Self. The Tamil *vidu* means both 'house' and 'liberation'.

The ego is the prison-house of the soul. The Heart is her true home where she finds liberation.

Reference may here be seen to Ramana leaving his uncle's house in Madurai and arriving at Arunachala.

98

veḷiviṭṭē nunseyal veṛuthiḍā dunnaruḷ
veḷiviṭ ṭenaikkā varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! I have made public Thy doings. Do not hate me for this. But do save me by admitting me into the Space that is Thine (i. e. grace).

In this hymn the devotee-soul has spoken about the sports that the Lord has played with her. He should not take any offence at this. It is the longing that she has for Him that has made her speak in the way she has done. The Lord, in His infinite mercy, should overlook all this, and come to save her.

99

vēdān tattē vēṛaṛa viḷaṇgum
vēdap poruḷaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Do grant me graciously the essential truth of the Vedas which shines in the Vedanta as the distinctionless Reality.

Vedanta means the end or goal of the Vedas. It is so called because the purport of the Vedas is taught therein.

The purport is that the Supreme Self, *Brahman*, is non-dual, one without a second. The distinctions that are experienced in the world, and the particulars that constitute it are not real; they are but apparent. The devotee-soul prays that this plenary truth be revealed to her. *Brahman* is the source of the Vedas; *Brahman* is to be known from the Vedas.

100

vaidalai vāzhttā vaittaruṭ kuḍiyā
vaittenai viḍādaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Considering even my slander as praise, take me under the protection of Thy grace, and do not reject me.

In taking liberties with the Lord, the devotee has hurled words of blame against Him. This is because she has intensive love for her Lord. He is not one who is carried away by the expressed words. He knows the inner intentions. He knows that the devotee's abusive expressions are but praises. He has to save not only those who speak sweetly of Him, but also those who say harsh things about Him. Are there not cases of saints who hurled stones at Him or beat Him with a bow, club, or stick?

The first three words of this verse may also be taken to mean: "Blessing me by placing Thy hand on my head."

101

ambuvi lālipō lanburu vunilenai
yanbāk karaittaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! As snow in water, dissolve me as love in Thy form which is Love. Thus be gracious.

Snow and water are not different from each other. Only in appearance do they differ. When snow melts, it becomes water. The soul and *Brahman* are not different. It is the adjunct of the soul's nescience, that makes for the apparent difference. When nescience is destroyed through knowledge, the truth of non-duality is realized. An *Upanishadic* text compares release (*moksha*) to milk being poured with milk, or water with water. There is no difference between milk that is poured and milk that is poured with, between water that is poured and the water that is poured with. It is all milk, all water.

The nature of the Self is pure love, happiness, bliss. The things that we imagine we love, do but reflect a fragrance of the love that is the Self. The Sage Yajnavalkya says to Maitreyi in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*: "Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Self is he dear. Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Self is she dear... Not for the sake of all is all dear, but for the sake of the Self is all dear."

The Self is the seat of happiness. It is Love itself. In the present verse, the devotee-soul prays for the dissolution of her separate individuality so that she may realize her true nature as the non-dual Love.

102

aruṇaiyen ḍreṇṇayā naruṭkaṇṇi paṭṭenun
naruḷvalai tappumō varuṇāchalā

O Arunachala! The moment I thought of Thee as Arunachala, I got caught in the net of Thy grace. Will the net of Thy grace ever fail one that is caught in it?

The Arch-Fisherman that Lord Arunachala is, He casts His net of grace in order that the souls may fall into it. The very moment the devotee-soul thinks of Arunachala she falls a prey to His grace. The net is so strong that no escape is possible for those who have found their way into it. The devotee-soul does not wish to escape from it. In the case of the physical net and the fish, the latter loses its freedom when it is caught. But in the case of the devotee-soul, she finds her real freedom when she comes into the ambit of divine grace.

103

chindit taruṭpaḍach chilandipōṛ kaṭṭich
chiraiyiṭ ṭuṇḍanai yaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Thinking of Thee, as I got caught in Thy grace, Thou didst bind me, like a Spider, imprison me and eat me up.

The analogy of the spider and its web is employed here. The spider weaves the web out of its own bowels, waits for the insects to get caught in the web, runs towards these victims

and swallows them up. Arunachala, the supreme Godhead, spreads His web of grace so that the devotees could be saved. Being swallowed up by God means destruction of the ego through enlightenment and grace. The devotee-soul realizes her identity with, or non-difference from, the Supreme Reality when this happens.

104

anboḍun nāmaṇke ḷanbarta manbaruk
kanbanā yiḍavaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Do grant me the gift of becoming the lover of Thy lovers who hear Thy name with love.

There is no difference between the Lord Arunachala and His name. There is no difference either between the Lord and His devotee. Service to the devotee is service to the Lord. Hence many a devotee has prayed to the Lord that he or she may be given the privilege of serving the Lord's devotees. Saint Tayumanavar says: "If I am trained to serve the devotees, the state of bliss will come to me of its own accord."

A verse of Saint Appar's gives a moving account of the devotee's God-madness thus: "At first she heard His name. She heard about His form and complexion. Then she heard about His beloved place of residence. As a result she became mad about Him. That very day she left her mother and father. She gave up the practices of the world at large. She

forgot herself. She lost her name. The maid placed her head at the Feet of her Lord."

105

enpōlun dīnarai yinbuṛak kāttunī
yennāḷum vāzhndaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Protecting helpless persons like me so that they may be happy, mayest Thou live for ever!

Arunachala is the helper of the helpless. He comes to the succour of those who are in distress. Saviourship is His very nature. He cannot but save His devotees, and eventually all souls, The devotee-soul prays that all should be saved. There is no room for selfishness in devotion and knowledge. Seeking release is not a selfish pursuit. When one is truly devoted to God, it redounds to the good of the entire world. There is the following universal prayer:

"Let all be happy here!
Let all be free from disease
Let all see things that are auspicious
Let no one have misery as his lot!"

106

enburu kanbarta minśoṛkoḷ seviyumen
punmozhi koḷavaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Be gracious so that Thy ears, which hear sweet songs of those devotees whose very bones melt with love, may accept also my poor strains.

Out of innate humility and modesty, the devotee-soul describes her strains as poor as compared with the fine poetry of the psalmists like Saint Manikkavachakar. In fact, all speech comes from the Lord. No one can utter any sound without His grace, He is the Speech of speech, the primal word. Without His grace, we cannot praise Him even. In the concluding verse of the *Saundarya Lahari*, Acharya Sankara prays to the Universal Mother thus:

"O Mother of speech! The composing of this hymn of praise addressed to Thee, couched in words that are Thine, is just like worshipping the sun by waving a row of blazing lights, like trying to please the moon with offering water-drops that drip from a moon-stone, and satisfying the ocean by pouring its own water into it."

107

poṛumaiyām bhūdara punsolai nansolāp
poṛuttaru ḷishṭampin naruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! Hill of Patience! Bear with my poor strains, considering them to be good poetry and be Thou gracious. Thy will be done!

To go wrong is human, to grant pardon is divine. The devotee-soul prays that the defects in her hymn of praise should be overlooked, and the devotion that inspired it should be accepted. Any attempt to praise the Lord is bound to fail; for He is beyond the reach of words and thoughts. The devotee-soul cannot but praise Him; but she does not ever hope to find words that are adequate. The devotee-soul has no will of her own. It is the Lord's will that moves the world. And the devotee knows this. Saint Manikkavachakar sings thus:

"What is to be desired for, Thou knowest best; it is Thou that dost grant what is desired for. To Brahma and Vishnu who desire Thee, Thou art rare to obtain, but of Thy own volition Thou didst assume lordship over me; therefore, whatever be Thy pleasure, do that Thou graciously. I seek the same. But if there should remain in me any trace of a trait desiring something of my own volition, is not that too Thy sweet will?"

108

mālai yaḷittaru ṇāchala ramaṇaven
mālai yaṇindaru ḷaruṇāchalā

O Arunachala! The ravishing Lord! Granting me the love profuse, graciously adorn Thyself with this garland of mine.

The love-litany is concluded in this verse. The devotee-soul prays for the intensification of divine love in her heart, and asks the Lord to accept her bridal garland of letters.

BENEDICTION

aruṇāchalam vāzhi,
yanbarkaḷum vāzhi
akshara maṇamālai vāzhi

LONG LIVE ARUNACHALA!

LONG LIVE THE DEVOTEES

LONG LIVE THIS BRIDAL GARLAND OF LETTERS.

Arunachala Pancharatnam

(Five Gems on Arunachala)

INTRODUCTION

OF THE FIVE HYMNS TO ARUNACHALA composed by Bhagavan Ramana the present one was originally written in Sanskrit. Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri, the great Sanskrit scholar and devotee, requested Bhagavan one day in 1917 to compose a poem in Sanskrit. Bhagavan replied with a smile that he knew little Sanskrit and less prosody relating to that language. But the Kavyakantha was not willing to leave the matter there. He explained to Bhagavan the technique of one of the Sanskrit metres called *arya*, and repeated his request. When he saw Bhagavan again in the evening, the poem was ready in exquisite Sanskrit, expressing in five short verses addressed to Arunachala, the entire teaching of *Vedanta*.

This hymn consists of five gem-like verses on Arunachala hence the name *Arunachala Pancharatnam*. In the first two verses the nature of Reality is set forth from two levels, *swarupa* (essential) and *tatastha* (*per accidens*). In the remaining three verses the paths to perfection are sketched in outline. Thus, in this short poem, Bhagavan has given us in *sutra* form the quintessence of *Vedanta*, as also the distinctive points of emphasis that are to be found in his teachings. This poem has been rendered by Bhagavan himself into Tamil *venba* for the benefit of Tamil knowing aspirants. The rendering was done in 1922 in response to a request from a

devotee who wanted to add this to four other poems in Tamil on Arunachala written by Bhagavan, and publish the collection under the title *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*.

In the first two verses of the *Arunachala Pancharatnam*, as we have said, the nature of Reality is indicated. The *Upanishads* describe the nature of Reality in two ways; in itself Reality is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*Sat-chit-ananda*); its qualification *per accidens* is the causality of the world.

The former definition is the *swarupa lakshana* of *Brahman*, the latter is the *tatastha lakshana*. The Real in itself is attributeless (*nirguna*) and unconditioned (*nirupadhika*). On account of *maya*, it appears as the cause of the world. In the first verse, Bhagavan refers to Arunachala as the Supreme Self (*Paramatman*) that is unconditioned and unqualified Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. It is supernal light; it is the ocean of bliss. In it there is no plurality, there is no world. It is *nishprapancha*. In the second verse, Arunachala is described as the world-ground, as God who is the source and the goal of the universe.

Creation, however, is not real; it is an illusory appearance. This is the implication of the picture analogy. As Bhagavan himself explained the meaning once to a devotee, "The universe is like a painting on a screen, the screen being the Red Hill, Arunachala. That which rises and sinks is made up of what it rises from. The finality of the universe is the God Arunachala." Thus, the world is a transfiguration (*vivarta*) of Arunachala-Brahman; it has no reality in itself. For the purpose of meditation on Arunachala, a location is

assigned in the body. The location is the "heart", not the physical heart which is on the left side of the chest, but the spiritual heart which is in the right side. Arunachala itself may be referred to as the "Heart", since it is the centre of all things.

In the third verse, Bhagavan teaches the path of Self-inquiry. This is the same as *jnana marga* (the path of knowledge). According to *Advaita Vedanta*, *jnana* is the direct means to *moksha*. *Moksha* is not what is to be newly accomplished. It is the eternal nature of the Self. On account of nescience (*avidya*) it remains unrecognized. What will make us recognize it, is the true knowledge of the Self. Bhagavan's formulation of the *jnana marga* is well known. It takes the form of the inquiry 'Who am I?'. Although all can take to this path, for sure and quick success one must possess a pure and one-pointed mind. The aids that render the mind fit to pursue the path of inquiry are meditation (*dhyana*), devotion (*bhakti*), and action (*karma*). In the fourth and the fifth verses, Bhagavan mentions these disciplines. Selfless service (*karma yoga*) removes all impurities from the mind. Devotion to God (*bhakti yoga*) and meditation (*dhyana yoga*) impart to the mind one-pointedness. When the pure mind turns within and inquires into its source, it merges in that source which is the Supreme Self, Arunachala. This is the final goal of all spiritual discipline, the plenary experience which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

1

karuṇāpūrṇa-sudhābdhē
kabalitaghana-visvarūpa kiraṇāvalyā
aruṇachala paramātman
aruṇō bhava chittakanja-suvikāsāya.

aruṇirai vāna vamudak kaḍalē
virikadirāl yāvum vizhuṅgu - maruna
giriparamān māvē kiḷaruḷappū naṅḍrāi
viriparidi yāga viḷaṅgu.

Ocean of nectar, full of grace, swallowing up the entire universe by successive waves of light! O Arunachala the supreme Self! Dawn on me so that the heart-lotus may blossom.

This is the first verse in Bhagavan Sri Ramana's *Arunachala Pancharatnam*. Here the prayer is for the blossoming of the heart-lotus. The heart is compared to the lotus because it is what is fit to be offered to the Lord. The blossoming of the heart can be effected only when the Lord's grace descends on it, even as the lotus opens at dawn when the sun rises. The Lord is the Sun of suns; and it is by His Grace that the heart of the individual soul should attain maturity and purity.

The Lord is Arunachala, the changeless and constant Light; He is the Supreme Self. He is the ocean of grace and immortality. It is He that destroys all that is evil, and imperfect.

Note on Transliteration: The Sanskrit transliteration of each four-lined verse is followed by the Tamil transliterated verse.

To whom but Him will the devotee turn for spiritual illumination that brings in the Life Eternal? It is by the Grace of Arunachala that perfection is gained.

2

tvayyaruṇāchala sarvam
bhūtvā sthitvā pralīnam etat chitram
hṛdyaham ityātmatayā
nṛtyasi bhōstē vadanti hṛdayam nāma.

cittiramā mihdellānj cemmalayē ninpālē
yuttitamāi ninḍrē yoḍingiḍumā-nittiyamu-
nānen ḍridaya naḍittiduvai yālunper-
tānidaya menḍriḍuvar tām.

In Thee, O Arunachala, all, having come into being and having stayed for a while, attain resolution. This is wonderful (or, This is like a picture). In the heart, Thou dancest as 'I', as the Self. O Lord, they call Thee by the name 'Heart'.

Arunachala is the supreme God. God is the sole and whole cause of world. A text of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* indicates the nature of *Brahman* by defining it as that whence all beings come into existence, wherein they reside and whereunto they return. *Brahman* is the ground of the universe. As the cause of the universe, it is called God. But no theory of creation can be satisfactory. How from the One the many appear is a mystery. Hence, it is said that God is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. The origin,

middle, and end of the world are all within God. So, Bhagavan Sri Ramana says that in Arunachala all these appear. That this should be so, indeed, is a wonder. It is true that explanations with the help of analogies such as the spider weaving the web out of its own bowels have been offered. But no such explanation is intended to be finally valid. The teaching about the world and its creation is designed only as a prelude to the realization of the non-dual *Brahman*.

The expression *etat chitram* may also be taken to mean 'This is like a picture'. The analogies from art are given in order to show that the world is not to be regarded as a mere fact but as indicative of the highest value which is *Brahman*. Even as a fact it has its basis in *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the canvas whereon the world-picture is painted.

The reality of the cosmos is the reality of the individual as well. In the heart it manifests itself as 'I', the Self. It is itself called the 'Heart' because it is the centre of all things. It is said to dance in the heart, because it is the principle of delight as well as the dynamism that moves all things.

Arunachala, the unmoving ground of the universe, is the same as Nataraja, the King of Dance who dances in the Hall of the heart-ether (Chidambaram).

3

aham iti kuta āyātī
tyanvishyāntah pravishṭayā tyamaladhiyā,
avagamya svam rūpam śāmyat
yaruṇāchala tvayi nadīvābdhau.

akamukamā randa vamalamadi tannā
lakamitudā neṅgezhumen ḍrāintē-yagavuruvai
nangaṛindu munnīr nadipōlu mōyumē
yunkaṅaru ṇachalane yōr.

He who inquires whence arises the 'I' thought, with a mind that is pure, turned inward, and realizes his own nature, becomes quiescent in Thee, O Arunachala, as a river in the ocean.

Here the path, of Self-inquiry is set forth. The technique consists in tracking the 'I' thought to its source. The 'I' thought is the first of all thoughts to arise. Wherefrom does it come? This has to be discovered, naturally, by employing the mind which is itself of the nature of thought. But it is only that mind that is pure and inward-turned that can accomplish this task. When the mind is impure and out-turned, it gets distracted, dissipated, and lost in the objects of sense. It has to turn away from its mad pursuit of the external in order to know the truth and find peace. This it can do only when it is pure. When the pure mind turns within and inquires into the origin of the I thought, it discovers that this 'I' is the pseudo-self. With this discovery all thoughts disappear, and the true Self alone remains. The ego commits suicide and becomes one with the Self that is Arunachala. This is compared to the river joining the sea and losing itself in it.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* (III, ii, 8) declares

yatha nadyah syandamanah samudre
stam gacchanti namarupe vihaya
tatha vidvan namarupadvimuktah
paratparam purusham upaiti divyam.

'As the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean, leaving name and form, so the wise one, freed from name and form, goes unto the divine Person, higher than the high'.

4

tyaktvā vishayam bāhyam
ruddha prāṇēna ruddha manasāntastvām,
dhyāyan paśyati yōgi
dīdhitim aruṇāchala tvayi mahīyantē

veḷi viḍayam viṭṭu viḷaṇgumaru ṇēsā
vaḷiyadakka niṛku manattā-luḷamadani
lunnait dyānittu yōgi yoḷikāṇu
munni luyarvuṛumī dun.

Rejecting the external objects, with breath and mind controlled, and meditating on Thee within, the Yogi beholds the light, O Arunachala and finds his delight in Thee (or, this is Thy Glory).

Here is outlined the way to *yoga* which is the path of meditation (*dhyana*). Usually the mind flows out through the sense organs towards the objects in order to enjoy them. It wrongly imagines that its delight lies in the objects. By dissipating itself away, it only comes to grief. But being under the spell of ignorance, it fails to learn the lesson. When it is disappointed with one object, it jumps on to another. *Yoga* is the return process of the mind; it is controlling the mind (*chittavritinirodha*), by making it turn inward. Breath-control is practised as an aid to mind-control. Disciplining the body and regulating the breath help in the taming of the mind.

When the mind is made one-pointed and fixed on the Self or God, one finds peace and joy within. Eventually the *yogi* realizes God. God is seen in the form of Light — not the physical light but the Pure Consciousness or Awareness. The Light that is Arunachala is the Supreme Spirit. Its splendour has no parallel; the greatness is unequalled. Seeing this Light is being it. The *yogi*'s individuality is dissolved; and there is the Allness alone which is Bliss.

5

tvayyarpita manasā tvām
paśyan sarvam tavākṛtitayā satatam
bhajatē' nanya prītyā
sajayaty aruṇāchala tvayi sukhē magnah

unniḍattil loppuvitta ullattā leppozhudu
munnaikaṇ ḍellamu munnuruvā-yanniyami
lanbuseyu mannō naruṇacha lāvelgu
minburuvā munnilāzhn dē.

With the mind offered unto Thee, seeing Thee, and seeing all as of Thy form, he who worships Thee with constant love conquers, being immersed in Thee that art Bliss, O Arunachala!

In the last verse, the path of devotion, and also the way of disinterested works by implication, are set forth. The essence of devotion consists in the total dedication of the individual soul to the service of God. *Bhakti* may begin by offering external things such as flowers and fruits to the deity; but when it matures, what is offered is the mind, the heart. This

the devotee will be able to do only when he sees God everywhere, and everything as an expression of God. He will then serve God in everything, which is the kernel of *karma yoga*. Through such service, the devotee's God-love becomes intense and undivided. And eventually he gains victory over all that is finite, inert and painful; he finds that his individuality has dissolved, and that there is only the limitless sea of bliss which is *Brahman*.

* * *

SAGE OF ARUNACHALA

Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan

This article was published in the Magazine Section of the Indian Express, on Sunday, 9th April, 1950, five days before the Maha Nirvana of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Tiruvannamalai (Arunachala, in Sanskrit) is one of the most sacred places of pilgrimage for Hindus, as God is worshipped there in the form of Light. Once a year the holy beacon is lit on the top of the hill. Thousands of people go thither to see the light and adore it. But all through the year the place has now become an international port of call for spirituality, because of the presence there of Maharshi Ramana, a living flame of God-realisation.

As a young lad in his teens he came to Arunachala, and for more than half a century he has not moved from that place. The very name 'Arunachala' served as an imperious call from the Divine, and he simply obeyed the call. The exalted state of egolessness came to him; and once it comes, it never goes. Strictly speaking, it is not one state among other states of experience. It does not come, nor occur in a given moment of time. It is the eternal status (*sahaja sthiti*). Because of *avidya* (nescience) one does not recognise it. And when *avidya* is made to disappear, the Self-luminous nature of the Spirit shines. This is what is called *moksha* in *Vedanta*. It is not an after-death experience. The continuance of the body is not inconsistent with release. It is only identification of the self with the ego that is an obstacle to

realisation. When that obstacle has been removed one becomes a *jivanmukta*, free while living. We hear of many such great souls in our scriptures. But in the Maharshi we have a contemporary *jivanmukta*, a living commentary on the most sublime texts of the *Vedanta*.

Many a statement of the scriptures, like the one in the *Bhagavad Gita* about seeing inaction in action and action in inaction will remain obscure and unintelligible, unless one comes into contact with sages like the Maharshi. Apparently, Sri Ramana seems to take interest in things that occur around him. He recognises people and sometimes talks to them. Even creatures belonging to the sub-human species claim his attention. But all these modes of action are performed without the least attachment to them. In truth, they are no actions at all, since they are void of egoity. The core of activity has been removed; only the shell remains; and that too only for us the onlookers.

Nothing seems to affect this Rock of Ages. He stands as a witness to all that happens far and near. The distinctions of high and low have no meaning for him. The stranger and the foreigner who visit him feel absolutely disarmed and free even at the first sight. One may be foreign to another or look strange; but how can one be alien to oneself? The Maharshi who has crossed the boundaries of individuality naturally and effortlessly feels, if we may use such a poor word, one with all. He looks upon all as the same, the high born and the lowly of birth, the cow and the elephant, the dog and the dog-eater. These classifications may have meaning for us who are caught in the network of difference. To him who has seen

the non-dual *Brahman* which is *sama*, the same, there is no plurality, no difference.

HEALER OF THE SOUL

It is a delightful and unique experience to sit in the presence of the Maharshi, and bask in the full radiance of his beatific eyes. One might go to him with a medley of doubts and questions. But very often it happens that these upsurgings of the mind die down and are burnt to ashes as one squats before the Sage. One has a foretaste of that pristine state of which the *Upanishads* speak, when the knot of the heart is cut and all the doubts are dispelled. One steps back and watches how the turbulent mental stream quietens down and receives an undisturbed reflection of the Self-luminous Spirit. What one may succeed in attaining after a prolonged course of *yogic* discipline, one attains with perfect ease and effortlessly in the proximity of the Maharshi. True, this experience may not stay for long. One may get back to the world and wallow again in the dirt of worldliness. But still, the impress of spirituality that has been gained is never lost. Seldom is one, the depths of whose soul have been stirred by the sublime look of the Sage, without the desire to go again to him and receive fresh intimations of the Eternal.

People sometimes go to him in the hope that by his *darshan* their earthly wants may be fulfilled. But very soon they discover their own foolishness in asking for fleeting pleasures, when the imperishable Bliss awaits them. Instead of getting dissatisfied that their cravings go unfulfilled, they

will feel thankful that they had been saved from a delusion and a snare. Naciketas of the *Kathopanisad* was offered by Yama all the pleasures of all the worlds in lieu of Self-knowledge for which he had asked; but the true son of spirituality that the boy was, he refused to be tempted into accepting the pleasant in the place of the good. The Maharshi who to us is the personification of the Supreme Good transmutes our lower passions and desires into *moksha kama*, an intense longing for release.

There are some who go to the Maharshi with a curiosity to know from him a cure-all for the world's ills. They ask him what solution he has for the problems of poverty, illiteracy, disease, war, etc. Social reform is their religion, a reordering of society is what they seek. They frame their questions in different ways. What message has the Maharshi to give to the social reformer? Is it not the duty of every enlightened citizen to strive for bettering the lot of his fellow men? When misery and squalor abound how can anyone who has a feeling heart, keep quiet without exerting himself in doing his bit for the welfare of the world? The invariable answer that the Sage gives to all those who put such questions is, "Have you reformed yourself first?" Very often it happens that the so called social service is a gratification of the ego. In much of what passes for altruism there is a core of egoism. Such service blesses neither the server nor the served. The former's pride increases, and the latter's demoralization is made complete. It is only such service as contributes to the reduction of the ego that is the harbinger of good. And the influence of the ego cannot be lessened unless one knows, however

remotely, that the ego is not the Self, that it is only the pseudo-self, responsible for all the evil and misery in the world, and that the final and lasting felicity could be realised only when the root cause of the ego, *viz.*, ignorance is dispelled. And so, unless one seeks to know the true Self, one cannot do real service to society. Reform must begin with oneself. He who is on the path renders service to fellow beings so that his ego may be cleansed and become attenuated and ready to be discarded. And he who has realised the End and has become a *jivanmukta* performs work, or more correctly, appears to perform work in order that the world may be saved (*loka sangraha*). So, Self-inquiry is the basis of true service; and Self-knowledge is its culmination.

NO NEW MESSAGE

The Sage of Arunachala has no new message for humanity. What he teaches through silence more than through words is the ageless gospel of the *Vedanta*. Sankara cites in his *sutra bashya* a *Sruti* text in which it is stated that when approached by Badhva for instruction, Sage Bashkali kept quiet, and on being questioned again and again said, “We have declared the truth already, but you have not understood: the Self is tranquil (*upasanta*).” The Maharshi’s teaching is exactly the same as that of the *Upanishadic* Sage. He seldom speaks. It is in the stillness of silence that the depths of the Spirit are reached. Words and thoughts cannot lead us far enough. Even the words of scripture help us only upto a point; and there they must stop. It is said of young

Dakshinamurti that he taught his elderly disciples in the language of silence. It is true that only few can understand what is taught in silence. And so, sometimes the Maharshi talks. But he warns his interlocutors at the same time that both questions and answers belong to the realm of *avidya*, (nescience) though the latter do serve as signposts towards the light of wisdom. Doubts will assail the mind so long as the mind lasts. It is only when the eternal state of mindlessness (*amani bhava*) is realised that all doubts of the mind and questionings of the heart will roll away like mist before the rising sun.

The Maharshi's teachings may be stated aphoristically thus: "Seek to know the Self, and the knowledge will make you free." The *Chandogya Upanishad* records the story of Narada, master of many sciences and arts, going to Sanatkumara and confessing that he was sorrow stricken, though he was very learned. He knew that all his learning would be of no avail and that Self-knowledge alone could save him. So, he approached Sanatkumara with the request to help him across the ocean of sorrow; and received from him the wisdom about the true Self. The supreme commandment of scripture is 'Know the Self' (*atmanam viddhi*). The Maharshi has said over and over again that *atma vichara* is the one sure and inescapable path for liberation or release. Other *sadhanas* may help in the process more or less remotely. It is *jnana* alone that is the direct means to *moksha*.

ATMA VICHARA

This is essentially the view of *Advaita Vedanta*. And the reason for it is that *mokṣha* is the eternal nature of the Self, and not something which is to be newly acquired or accomplished. No operation, either of the body or of the mind, brings about release. The ever free status of the Self is not recognized because of ignorance which veils the true and projects the untrue. When this ignorance is removed one realizes one's eternal nature as the non-dual, unconditioned Self. That which effects the removal of ignorance is wisdom. And what paves the way for wisdom is *Atma Vichara*.

The enquiry 'Who am I?' is not to be regarded as a mental effort to understand the mind's nature. Its main purpose is to focus the entire mind at its source. The source of the psychosis 'I' is the Self. What one does in Self-enquiry is to run against the mental current, instead of running along with it, and finally transcend the sphere of mental modifications. It is comparatively easy for us to disentangle ourselves from wrong identification with the physical body and material objects. But the identification with the ego is hard to get over. As the *Pancha Padiḳa* a commentary on Sankara's *Sutra bhasya*, says, "The conceit 'I' is the first superimposition on the Self." The outer layers of ignorance may fall away easily. The last one, however, is difficult to tear. The best way to remove it is to track it down to its source. When there is awareness of the source which is the Self, the ego vanishes. And when the 'I' has been crossed out through *jnana*, there is no more bondage and consequent sorrow.

MOKSHA

The cessation or the non-cessation of the body has nothing to do with release. The body may continue to exist and the world may continue to appear, as in the case of the Maharshi. That makes no difference at all to the Self that has been realised. As Sankara says, "There is no need to dispute whether the knower of *Brahman* bears the body for some time or not. How can another object to one's own experience, realised in the heart, of *Brahman*-knowledge and the continuance of the body as well?" In truth there is neither the body nor the world for him; there is only the Self, the eternal Existence (*sat*), the Self-luminous Intelligence (*chit*), the unexcellable Bliss (*ananda*). Such an experience is not entirely foreign to us. We have it in sleep where we are conscious neither of the external world of things nor of the inner world of dreams. But that experience lies under the cover of ignorance. So it is that we come back to the phantasies of dream and the world of waking. Non-return to duality is possible only when nescience is removed. To make this possible is the object of *Vedanta*. To inspire even the least of us with hope and help us out of the slough of despond is the purpose of such illustrious exemplars as the Maharshi.

Sri Ramana's example is unique because he did not first read and then experience. Experience came to him first; and only later he found corroborative evidence in the scriptural texts. To an unbelieving world which is impatient and wants to burn its sacred books, Sri Ramana, like Sri Ramakrishna in an earlier generation, has this message to offer, *viz*., that the real Book of Life is within, and that, if we but turn to it

and consult its pages it will open up undreamt of vistas leading to limitless felicity and bliss.

* * *